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Milites Christi in hortis liliorum domini? : hagiographic constructions of masculinity and holiness in thirteenth-century Liege

Milites Christi in Hortis Liliorum Domini? Hagiographic Constructions of Masculinity and Holiness in Thirteenth-Century Liège

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Abstract

Scholars of medieval religious practice agree that gender played some role in influencing hagiographic depictions of religious behaviour. However as is outlined in the introductory chapter, the idea of using gender as an analytical tool has been predominantly applied to women and femininity. This thesis endeavours to redress the balance in studies of gender and medieval devotion. It explores the *vitae* of eleven male saints who were connected with the Liègeoise Cistercian houses of Villers and Aulne during the thirteenth century. The men come from a variety of backgrounds and represent the three different Cistercian vocations of abbot, monk and *conversus*. It is significant that these Cistercian brothers had considerable contact with the much-studied Liègeoise *mulieres sanctae*. The first chapter of this thesis outlines the social and codicological connections between the two groups.

Despite considerable variation in the backgrounds of their subjects, there is a definite thematic unity in the forms of devotion portrayed in the *vitae*. Four themes which are prominent both in the *vitae* and the devotional climate of the high Middle Ages are discussed in Chapters Two and Three of this thesis. The themes are conversion, visionary experiences, Marian devotion and the crusading ideal. Chapter Two presents the significance of these themes in didactic literature from western Europe in the high Middle Ages and Chapter Three analyses the significance of these themes in the *vitae* of these men.

Chapter Four illustrates the limitations of gendered analysis and the dangers attached to using a gendered theory as absolute. The importance of gender has been exaggerated, yet its importance cannot be dismissed. This chapter also illustrates the ways in which gender plays a role in forming constructions of holiness. Furthermore, it both presents the implications for, and advances a theory of medieval masculinity.

Acknowledgements

It is said that we can accomplish nothing alone. Certainly, this thesis would never have been completed without the kindness of many people. I am particularly grateful to my advisor, Carolyn Muessig, who rescued me repeatedly from the abyss of academic accedia. Without her kindness, guidance and support this thesis would never have been written. I am deeply indebted to my dear friend Monica Sandor for her continuing role as my guardian angel, both in matters connected and unconnected to study. I am also obliged to Isabelle Cochelin for shaping my interest in things medieval and asking questions that inspired my curiosity about medieval constructs of gender in the first place.

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My deepest love and thanks go to my family, John, Margaret, Andrew and Louise More. I have relied on their love, as well as their help, editing skills, inspiration and encouragement both while writing this thesis and throughout my life.

Now all that remains is to acknowledge an enormous debt of gratitude that can never be repaid. I was fortunate enough to encounter a man whose compassion, humanity and munificence would be the envy of any saint in this thesis. Reginald Thomas Foster taught me Latin as well as many things about every aspect of life. It is to him that this thesis is lovingly dedicated.

Contents

Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original, except where indicated by special reference in the text, and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other academic award. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

Signed: Alison Moore

Date: 10 12 2004

Abbreviations

AASS	*Acta Sanctorum.* (Antwerp, 1643-)
AB	Analecta Bollandiana (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1882-)
AGR	Bruxelles/Brussel, Archives Générales du Royaume/Algemeen Rijkascheif Brussel
B. L.	London, British Library
B. R.	Brussel/Bruxelles, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I/ Bibliothèque royale Albert Ier
Cîteaux	Cîteaux: Comentarii Cisterciensis
CSQ	Cistercian Studies Quarterly
DM	Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, ed. Joseph Strange, 2 vols. (Cologne: Heberle 1851).
DS	*Dictionaire de Spiritualité, ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire,* ed. M. Viller et al. (Paris: Beachesne, 1932--).
EO	"Capitula Ecclesiasticorum Officiorum," ed. P. Guignard, *Les Monuments Primitifs de la Règle Cistercienne* (Dijon: n. p., 1878).
EM	*Enchiridion Marianum: Biblicum, Patristicum.* (Rome: Sumptibus "Cor Unum," 1974).
EP	*Enchiridion Patristicum: Loci SS Patrum, Doctorum, Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum*, ed. M. J. Rouet de Journel (Fribourg: Herder, 1946).
MGH-SS	*Monumenta Germania historica. Scriptores rerum germanicarum* and *Scriptores*...nova ser. (Hannover: Hahnesche Buchhandlung etc. 1826--).
PL	J. P. Migne, ed. *Patrologia cursus completus: series latina*, 221 vols. (Paris: Migne, 1841-1864).
RC	"Regula Conversorum," *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum,* bk. 4, cc. 1647-49. (Farnborough, Hants: Gregg Int., 1968).
Statuta	*Statuta capitulorum generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis*, ed. J. Canivez. (Louvain: Bureaux de la Revue, 1933).
ST	Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* Blackfriars ed., 61 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964-1981).
TNA	*Thesaurus novum anecdotorum*, ed. E. Martène and U. Durand, 3 vols. (Paris: n. p., 1717).

UC	"Usus Conversorum" in *Cistercian Lay Brothers: Twelfth-century Usages with Related Texts* ed. Chrysogonus Waddell. (Brecht: Cîteaux, 2000).
VAB	Goswin of Bossut, "De *Vita* Abundus Van Hoei," ed. A.M. Frenken. *Cîteaux* 10 (1959): 5-33.
VBN	"Vita beatae et Deo dilectae Beatricis monialis ac Priorissae in Nazareth, Ordinis Cisterciensis" *Quinque Prudentes Virgines*, ed. Chrysostomus Henriquez. Antwerp: Ioannes Cnobbaert, 1630.
VAR	Goswin of Bossut, "De b. Arnulfo Monacho, Ordinis Cisterc. Villiarii in Brabantia," *AASS*, Iun. vol. 5, 606-31.
VAS	"De B. Aleyde Scharembeka, Sanctimoniali Ordinis Cisterciensis, Camerae Iuxta Bruxellam." Iun. vol. 2, pp. 477-81.
VCA	De Carolo VIII Villariensi Abbate in Brabantia," *AASS*, Ian. vol. 2, pp.
VCM	Thomas de Cantimpré. "De Sancta Christina Mirabili Virgine Vita" *AASS*, Iul. vol. 5, 637-60.
VGA	"De b. Goberto Confessor, Ordinis Cisterciensis, in Abbatia Villariensi in Brabantia." *AASS*, Aug. vol.4, 370-95.
VGP	"Vita Godefridi Pachomius," *AB* 14 (1895): 263-68.
VGS	"De B. Godefrido Presbyterio Ordinis Cisterciensis Villarii in Brabantia," *AASS*, Oct. vol. 1, 531-37.
VIL	"De Vener. Ida Lovaniensi, Ord. Cisterc. In Brabantia prope Mechlinam." *AASS*, Apr. vol. 2, 155-89.
VIN	*The Life of Ida of Nivelles*. Trans. Martinus Cawley. (Guadalupe Abbey, 1987). This edition contains both the Latin and English text.
VIC	Thomas de Cantimpré. "Vita Ioannis Cantipratensis," ed. Robert Godding. *Revue d'histoire écclesiastique* 76 (1981): 257-316.
VJH	Hugh de Floreffe. "De b. Ivetta, sive Ivtta, Vidua Reclusa, Hui in Belgio." *AASS*, Jan. vol. 1, 863-887.
VJM	De b. Iuliana Virgine, Priorissa Montis-Cornelii apud Leodium, Promotrice Festi Corporis Christi. *AASS*, Apr. vol. 1, 443-76.
VLA	Thomas de Cantimpré. "De S. Lutgarde Virgine, Sanctimoniali Ordinis Cisterciensis, Aquiriae in Brabantia." *AASS*, Iun. vol. 3, 231-263.
VMO	Jacques de Vitry. "De b. Maria Oigniacensi in Namurcensi Belgii Diocesii." *AASS*, Iun. vol. 4, pp. 630-684.

VMY	Thomas de Cantimpré. *Vita Margaretae de Ypris*, ed. G. Meerseman in "Les frères prêcheurs et le mouvement dévot en Flandres au XIIIe siècle," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 18 (1948): 106-130.
VNC	"De B. Nicolao Fratre Converso Ordinis Cisterciensis Villarii in Brabantia," *AASS*, Nov. vol. 4, pp. 277-79
VPB	William of St. Thierry, et al., "Vita Prima Sancti Bernardi," PL 185, cc. 225-368.
VPC	"Petrus conv. Villariensis in Belgio," MS BR 7776-7781, ff. 86r-90v.
VSA	"Vita Simonis Alnensis," MS BR 8965-8966, ff. 209r-224r
VWA	"Vita domni Werrici, prioris de Alna," pp. 445-63 in *Catalogus Codicum Hagiographicorum Bibliothecae Regiae Bruxellensis*, t. 1. Bruxelles: Typis Polleunis, Ceuterick an Lefébure, 1886.

Introduction: Medieval Devotion and Hagiographic Portrayals of Gender: the State of the Question

Historia est quae praeterita narrat,
Prophetia quae futura narrat
Hagiographia quae aeterna vitae gaudia iubilat.[1]

Does gender influence the ways in which holiness is portrayed? There is every indication that it does. Scholarship on medieval religious behaviour has revealed that understanding the devotional practices of medieval women provides valuable insights into the ways in which the relationship between humanity and the divine was perceived in the high Middle Ages. Many influential studies have indicated that gender—the culturally defined norms of "masculinity" and "femininity," which are only peripherally related to biological sex—is fundamental in influencing the ways in which later medieval religious behaviour was depicted.[2] However, one of the important implications of this finding has, until recently, been all but ignored. Why has gendered analysis been predominantly applied to an examination of the effects of femininity on the religious behaviour of women? Is it not also important to examine masculinity and its effects on the religious behaviour

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1. Honorius Augustodunensis, "De mysterio psalmorum," PL 172 c. 273.

2. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Barbara Newman, *From VirileWoman to WomanChrist* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, *Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). A collection of essays is devoted to discerning the voices of medieval holy women, *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and their Interpreters,* ed. Catherine M. Mooney (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). Until recently, studies on gender and religious behaviour in the modern age have predominantly concentrated on women. *Religion and Gender,* ed. Ursula King (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995). Cf. Stephen B. Boyd, W. Merle Longwood and Mark W. Muesse "Men Masculinity and the Study of Religion," in *Redeeming Men: Religion and Masculinities,* ed. Boyd et al. (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1996), p. xiii. For societal roles see, Isabelle Cochelin, "Sainteté laïque: l'exemple de Juette de Huy 1158-1228" *Le Moyen Âge* 95 (1989): 397- 417; Paulette L'hermite-leclercq, "Le reclus dans la ville au bas Moyen Âge." *Journal des Savants* (1988): 219-58. For an examination of the terms, "sex" and "gender" see, Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 8-14, 52-62; Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 1-23.

of men? While the studies on medieval holiness and femininity are voluminous, the influence of gender on the religious behaviour of male saints remains largely unexplored.[3] The majority of traditional scholarship has focussed on the deeds of men, or, as Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza points out, on a male elite.[4]

The focus on medieval women that was adopted by scholars in the later twentieth century was certainly justified. Prior to the work of scholars such as Brenda Bolton, Caroline Walker Bynum, Elizabeth Petroff and Barbara Newman, the religious behaviour of men was equated with religion *simpliciter*. At this time, most scholarship of medieval religion drew its conclusions from male-authored theological treatises or the rules and customaries for male religious houses. When scholars began to examine texts describing the religious behaviour of women, they noticed certain behaviours—fasting, visionary experiences, concern for the souls in purgatory or devotion to Christ's passion—that differed, to varying degrees, from the established norm. These behaviours were immediately labelled "feminine." However, there has been no effort, before

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3. A comprehensive survey of the available literature on medieval masculinities accentuates the gender discrepancy. After years of neglect, the role of masculinity in religious devotion is beginning to be explored. Recent collections of essays include: *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages,* ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1997) and *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages,* ed. Claire A. Lees (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994). Jean Sallman has examined inquisitorial records in the unrealised hope of constructing a typically masculine experience of false sanctity (Jean-Michel Sallmann, "Esiste una falsa santità maschile?" *Finizione e santità tra medievo ed età moderna,* ed. Gabriella Zarri (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1991), pp. 119-28. Other studies include: Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in late Medieval Europe* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Mathew Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Ulrike Wiethaus, "Christian Piety and the Legacy of Medieval Masculinity," in *Redeeming Men,* pp. 48-61. Recently, John Arnold has reviewed Karras' work, and highlighted the difficulties of producing a "the first single-authored volume devoted to the topic of medieval masculinity" (John Arnold, "Book Review," a review of Karras' work published on http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/paper/arnoldJ2.html. Accessed 14 03 2004).

4. Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), pp. 80-101. I am grateful to Louis Beasley-Suffolk for directing my attention to this work.

or since, either to ascertain the presence of or analyse the function of such devotional themes in the *vitae* of their male contemporaries.

Scholars of medieval religion have treated the *vitae* of male and female saints in a very different manner. The *vitae* of religious men were considered potential sources of information about the scholarly, public or political activities of their subjects; the *vitae* of their female contemporaries were generally subject to thematic analysis. Regardless of traditional mistrust of the genre of hagiography, the *vitae* of male saints have often been treated in a similar manner to other forms of medieval narrative history. The sensational, devotional or miraculous aspects which distinguish hagiography from other narrative biographies were generally ignored, in favour of, often dubious, narrative witness to historical events.[5] Bernard of Clairvaux (+1153) revitalised the Cistercian Order, made significant contributions to medieval mariology, and preached the second crusade. Dominic (+1221) and Francis of Assisi (+1226) founded religious orders; Thomas Aquinas'(+1274) reputation as a scholar extended throughout Europe and his writings had a significant impact on Church teaching. These facts are all attested to in their *vitae*, and have, not surprisingly, received significantly more attention than Francis or Dominic's visionary experiences and Bernard's rigorous ascetic practices.

It was rare for a female saint of the high Middle Ages to be called upon to preach a crusade or to found a religious order. Because of the absence of, even spurious, witness to great deeds, scholars have traditionally ignored the *vitae* of female saints. Despite their conspicuous absence from earlier established scholarship, the *vitae mulierum* have been the dominant source for recent thematic examinations of physical asceticism, visionary

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5. Adriaan H. Bredero, *Bernard of Clairvaux: Between Cult and History* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), pp. 3-16, 160-86. Cf. Felice Lifshitz, "Beyond Positivism and Genre: 'Hagiographical' Texts as Historical Narrative," *Viator* 25 (1994): 95-100; Thomas Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 43-55.

experiences, concern for the souls in purgatory, or eucharistic devotion.[6] Although it is clear that these themes are important to women, it is premature to call them "feminine" themes. The evidence for labelling them as such comes almost exclusively from the *vitae* of women and there has, as yet, been little comparable exploration of the *vitae* of their male contemporaries.

The present thesis endeavours to redress the imbalance that currently exists in studies of gender and devotion. It uses the *vitae* of holy men from the high Middle Ages to identify and delineate a masculine spirituality. In doing so, it both aims to provide a more nuanced definition of feminine spirituality and examines the role of gender in hagiographic constructions of holiness. This thesis considers the ways in which holiness is depicted in eleven *vitae* of holy men from the Low Countries during the high Middle Ages. Though recognised for their sanctity, these men were not otherwise extraordinary: they were neither renowned scholars nor influential preachers; they did not found religious orders and did not convert kingdoms. Instead, as is the case for the *vitae mulierum*, the hagiographers of these men described their devotional practices in significant detail. This thesis examines the specific devotional themes, in the context of the spiritual climate of the high Middle Ages, their role in the *vitae* themselves and any variations that occur between the *vitae* of Liègeois male and female saints. It both explores and questions the role of gender in influencing portrayals of religious devotion, and endeavours to add a new dimension to the debate about the relationship between gender and religious behaviour.

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6. Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); idem, "Women and Mysticism in the Medieval World," in *Body and Soul*, pp. 3-24; Walter Simons, "Reading a Saint's Body: Rapture and Bodily Movement in the *Vitae* of Thirteenth-Century Beguines," in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 10-23; Mary Suydam, "Beguine Textuality: Sacred Performances," in *Performance and Transformation: New Approaches to Late Medieval Spirituality*, ed. Mary A. Suydam and Joanna E. Ziegler (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 169-210; JoAnn McNamara, "The Need to Give: Suffering and Female Sanctity in the Middle Ages," in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, edited by Renate Blumenfield-Kosinski and Timea Szell (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 199-221.

The aims of this thesis are twofold: first, to introduce and examine a corpus of virtually unknown medieval texts; and second, to analyse these texts with respect to the role of the gender of their subjects in influencing the way in which holiness was portrayed. In order to accomplish the first of these aims, this thesis investigates the *vitae* and historical circumstances of eleven Cistercian men, who lived in the diocese of Liège during the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These texts are described in Chapter One of this thesis. As the majority of the men whose *vitae* are studied lived in the Cistercian house of Villers, these texts are referred to throughout as the "Villers corpus."[7] The *vitae* present saints who lived three different Cistercian vocations: the abbot, the monk and the *conversus*. The corpus contains: two *vitae abbatum,* the *lives* of Charles of Villers and Walter of Birbech; five *vitae* of choir monks, Godefridus Pachomius, Godefridus the Sacristan of Villers, Gobertus of Aspremont, Werricus of Aulne, and Abundus of Villers; and four *vitae* of *conversi,* Arnulfus of Villers, Petrus of Villers, Nicholaos of Villers and Simon of Aulne.[8] These men, with the possible exception of Arnulfus, are unfamiliar to scholars;[9] however, it would seem that their obscurity is a product of the modern age. Manuscript evidence suggests that these *vitae* and the associated book of the illustrious deeds of the

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7. The aim of this thesis is to examine gender and holiness, not specifically the house of Villers. This corpus also includes men from the Cistercian houses Aulne and Birbech who were connected with the men from Villers and whose *vitae* are thematically similar. The term "Villers corpus" also includes the *vitae* of these men.

8. Joining the lay brotherhood is commonly thought of as a matter of economic necessity rather than a vocational choice. This common misconception is not backed up by documentary evidence. See my discussion in Chapter One of this thesis.

9. Brian Patrick McGuire, "Self-Denial and Self-Assertion in Arnulf of Villers" in *CSQ* 28 (1993): 241-59; Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porète, and Meister Eckhart* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), pp. 29-30. For a more comprehensive examination of the Villers *vitae conversorum* see, Martha Newman, "'Crucified by the Virtues: Monks Lay Brothers and Women in Thirteenth-Century Cistercian Saints' Lives,' in *Gender and Difference in the Middle Ages,* edited by Sharon Farmer and Carol Braun Pasternack (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 182-209; Katrien Heene, "Deliberate Self-Harm and Gender in Medieval Saints' Lives," *Hagiographica* 6 (1999): 213-33. Some work has been done with the manuscripts of the *vitae* see, Thomas Falmagne, *Un texte en contexte: 'Les Flores Paradisi' et le milieu culturel de Villers en Brabant dans la primière moitié du 13e* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001); Daniel Misonne, "Office Liturgique neumé de la bienheureuse Marie d'Oignies à l'Abbaye de Villers au XIIIe siècle." in *Revue Bénédictine* 111 (2001): 270-78.

Villers brothers, the *Chronica villariensis,* were both known and influential throughout Western Europe in the later medieval and early modern period.[10]

Despite the apparent medieval popularity of these texts, they are far from being accessible to the modern age: not even one has yet merited a critical edition; no vernacular translation exists of the *Chronica villariensis,* and only five of the *vitae*—the *lives* of Simon, Abundus, Arnulfus, Charles and Godefridus the Sacristan—have been translated into the modern vernacular.[11] Eight of the eleven *vitae* have been edited by the Bollandists; one is published in a Cistercian journal; one was edited in the seventeenth century. Manuscript editions of the remaining *vita* have been used in the research for this thesis. All eleven texts were written in Latin and no contemporary translations into the vernacular are known.

To accomplish its second aim, this thesis examines the religious behaviour portrayed in the *vitae* of these men in conjunction with that depicted in the *lives* of their female contemporaries. As is mentioned above and described in detail below, there has been considerable work on the devotional practices and historical circumstances of medieval women. The thematic discussion in Chapter Three of this thesis shows that considerable insights can be gained by applying similar methodology to the *vitae* of male saints.

During the high Middle Ages, many religious orders refused to accept responsibility for women's houses and the *Frauenfrage* made it difficult for women to marry.[12] Instead

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10. Falmagne, *Un texte en contexte,* pp. 37-49.

11. *Vie du Bienheureux Simon convers à l'abbaye d'Aulne,* tr. B. de Dorlodot (Tournai: n. p., 1968); *Goswin of Bossut, Send me God: The Lives of Ida the Compassionate of Nivelles, Nun of La Ramée, Arnulf, Lay Brother of Villers, and Abundus, Monk of Villers,* tr. Martin Cawley (Turhout: Brepols, 2003); "Traduction française de la Vie de dom Charles, abbé de Villers," tr. F. Lebrun, *Villers* 19 (2001): 10-17; "Traduction française des sources relatives à la vie de Godefroy le sacristain," tr. F. Lebrun & J. B. Lefèvre, *Villers* 21 (2002): 28-33.

12. *Frauenfrage* translates literally as "women-question" and refers to the uneven ratio between marriageable men and women that developed in the high Middle Ages. This theory was initially put forward by Karl Bücher, in his 1910 work *Die Frauenfrage im Mittelalter.* It is discussed in Martha Howell et al., "A Documented Presence: Medieval Women in Germanic Historiography," in *Women in Medieval History and Historiography,* ed. Susan Mosher Stuard (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), pp. 101-31. Cf. Penelope D. Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession:*

of effecting institutional change, religiously inclined women of this time chose to take responsibility for their own spiritual lives and, particularly in the Low Countries, to dedicate their lives to the Lord without leaving the secular world.[13] Such women, who eventually became known as beguines, lived either alone or in small communities. Though, in most cases, they never left the world even a cursory glance at their *vitae* indicates that they were far from worldly.

Influential churchmen including Jacques de Vitry (+1240) and Thomas de Cantimpré (+c.1272) recorded the *vitae* of eleven women from Liège: Marie d'Oignies, Juette of Huy, Lutgard of Aywières, Juliana of Mont-Cornillon, Ida of Nivelles, Ida of La Ramée, Alice of Schaerbeek, Christina of St. Trond, Ida of Leeuw, Beatrice of Nazareth, and Margaret of Ypres.[14] These women are often referred to as "beguines," or more correctly as the *mulieres sanctae.* As Simone Roisin has pointed out, all had some association with the Cistercian Order.[15] Modern scholars often view the *vitae* of these women as textual witnesses to developing forms of feminine devotional expression.[16] It is true that the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* were among the first hagiographic records of practices such as concern for the souls in purgatory or eucharistic devotion; however, it must be kept in

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Religious Women in Medieval France (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 255; Dayton Phillips, *Beguines in Medieval Strasbourg* (California: Stanford University, 1941), p. 20; Michel Lauwers and Walter Simons, *Béguins et Béguines à Tournai au Bas Moyen Âge: Les communautés béguinales à Tournai du XIII• siècle* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1988).

13. Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries 1200-1565* Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2001), p. 14.

14. Basic biographic information for these women is included in appendix A of this thesis.

15. Roisin, *L'hagiographie,* pp. 49-72.

16. There is some question as to whether these themes represented the reality of women's religious experience or the ideal their hagiographers held for holy women (Michel Lauwers, "L'expérience béguinale et récit hagiographique: à propos de la Vita Mariae Oigniacensis de Jacques de Vitry," *Journal des savants* 11 (1989): 61-103).

mind that such forms of religious expression were entirely in keeping with the mores of the high Middle Ages.[17]

Much modern scholarship agrees upon an accepted definition of feminine spirituality. Scholars see feminine devotion as somatic, that is consisting of practices centred on the body, and as "affective, exuberant, lyrical and filled with images."[18] The religious behaviour of medieval women is also thought to include devotion to the the Eucharist or the physical suffering associated with Christ's passion. This definition of feminine spirituality is so frequently extolled in modern scholarship that ascetic or visionary men such as the visionary stigmatic Francis of Assisi or the ascetic Henry Suso (+1366) have been referred to as practicing a "feminine spirituality."[19]

When Francis' hagiographer depicted his five mysterious wounds or Henry Suso described his elaborate variations on hair shirts, it is unlikely that they intended to depict a "feminine" method of approaching the divine. Instead, Francis' stigmata were a way of identifying him with Christ and Henry's descriptions of his asceticism placed him in a long tradition of saintly ascetics. As questions of gender are important to modern scholars, it is no surprise that it has become popular to read any religious behaviour as gendered. While gender is and was important, it is likely that it was neither the only nor the most important factor in determining religious behaviour. By conjointly examining contemporary *vitae sanctorum* and *sanctarum,* it is possible to identify and examine the similarities and differences. In cases where devotional expressions now accepted as feminine

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17. Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory,* tr. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

18. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast,* p. 105.

19. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast,* p. 105.

are found in the *vitae* of holy men, other influential factors—ecclesiastical status, social status, and education—are considered.[20]

Gender, unlike biological sex, is subjective. "Masculinity" and "femininity" are cultural constructs that are largely defined in relation to one another.[21] Study on feminine devotional practice was only possible after a definition of femininity had been established. In her article, "...And Woman His Humanity," Caroline Walker Bynum advanced a definition that encompasses the commonly accepted portrayal of feminine spirituality.

> *Male* and *female* were contrasted and asymmetrically valued as intellect/body, active/passive, rational/irrational, reason/emotion, self-control/lust, judgement/mercy, order/disorder.[22]

In the many studies on medieval feminine devotion, there has been little attention to the disordered nature of women; however, many of the other characteristics that Bynum identifies—mercy, passivity and physicality—have become *topoi* in studies of feminine religious practices. Exploring the role of such "feminine" themes in later medieval devotion has allowed an understanding of the roles that themes such as the body or

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20. Cf. Sharon Farmer, "The Beggar's Body: Intersections of Gender and Social Status in High Medieval Paris," in *Monks, Nuns, Saints and Outcasts: Religion in Medieval Society. Essays in Honour of Lester K. Little*, ed. by Sharon Farmer and Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000), p. 153; idem, *Surviving Poverty in Medieval Paris: Gender, Ideology and the Daily Lives of the Poor* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 39-73; idem, "Introduction," *Gender and Difference*, pp. ix-xi; Heene, "Deliberate Self-Harm," pp. 213-33; Newman, "'Crucified by the Virtues,'" pp. 182-209; Steven F. Kruger, "Becoming Christian, Becoming Male," in *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages*, ed. J. J. Cohen and B. Wheeler (London: Garland Publishing, 1997), pp. 21-34.

21. R. W. Connell, "The Social Organization of Masculinity," in *The Masculinities Reader* ed. Stephen M. Whitehall and Frank J. Barrett (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), pp. 31-32; David H.J. Morgan, *Discovering Men* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 62; Sylvia M. Hale, *Controversies in Sociology* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1995), pp. 104-06; Arthur Brittan, *Masculinity and Power* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 1; Seth Mirsky, "Three Arguments for the Elimination of Masculinity," in *Men's Bodies, Men's Gods: Male Identities in a (Post-) Christian Culture*, ed. Björn Krondofer (New York and London: University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 27-29. Cf. Margaret A. Gallucci, *Benvenuto Cellini: Sexuality, Masculinity and Artistic Identity in Renaissance Italy* (Palmgrave: New York, 2003), pp. 112-13, 133 n. 6.

22. Caroline Walker Bynum, "'...And Woman His Humanity:' Female Imagery in the Religious Writing of the Later Middle Ages," in *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*, ed. Caroline Walker Bynum, Stevan Harrell and Paula Richman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), p. 257.

motherhood played in the religious climate as a whole. Let us first examine some of the conclusions reached in regards to femininity and medieval devotion, and then ask whether similar methodology can be applied to male saints.

In 1987, Caroline Walker Bynum published *Holy Feast and Holy Fast,* which is often considered a seminal work in the study of feminine religious devotion.[23] *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* analysed the role of food and food-related symbolism in the *vitae* and writings of female saints and used the language and imagery of food to understand prominent themes in the religious devotion of women. In Bynum's analysis, the propensity of medieval women toward vicarious suffering was often expressed by both fasting and the ingestion of seemingly inedible substances. Active service was accomplished through the renunciation or sharing of food.[24] The later medieval practice of *imitatio Christi* was also expressed in the *vitae* of women using food-related symbolic language. As Bynum says,

> Women's bodies, in the acts of lactation and giving birth, were analogous both to ordinary food and to the body of Christ, as it died on the cross and gave birth to salvation.[25]

The prevalence of this association grew more intense as eucharistic devotion became established in medieval Europe.[26]

The publication of *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* caused an immediate sensation in the study of medieval spirituality, the effects of which are still being felt more than fifteen years later. This work has done much to promote the study of medieval women's history: it has "become required reading" in many university courses, and it is often "the one me-

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23. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast.*

24. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast,* pp. 121-29; cf. McNamara, "The Need to Give," pp. 199-221.

25. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast,* p. 30. Cf. Esther Cohen, "The Animated Pain of the Body," *The American Historical Review* 105 (2000): 36-68.

26. Rubin, *Corpus Christi,* pp. 317-19.

dieval selection in surveys of gender studies."[27] It is unclear whether or not Bynum's work has revealed an intrinsic truth about medieval feminine religious behaviour. As Bynum's critics, including Nicholas Watson and Michel Lauwers, have pointed out, her "feminine" material could easily be recast as an ideal created by male hagiographers.[28] Despite controversy over its thesis, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* has played a valuable role in the history of spirituality.[29] This work explored the tapestry of medieval devotion by following the thread of food and food-related practice in the *lives* and writings of holy women and advanced a methodology for doing so. Other scholars have attempted the same with other forms of religious expression common to female saints: Elizabeth Petroff has examined the role of visionary experiences;[30] Walter Simons has looked at bodily movement;[31] Mary Suydam has explored public ecstasy and JoAnn McNamara has studied purgatorial piety.[32] The work of these scholars has been extremely valuable and has provided considerable insight into the way in which individuals related to their devotional climate. Many of these studies have claimed their findings to be gender specific, but have generally made little or no reference to the religious behaviour of the male contemporaries of the women who were their focus.

The most obvious differences between men and women are biological. In the Aristotelian understanding of biology that was popular in the high Middle Ages, women

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27. Kathleen Biddick, "Genders, Bodies, Borders: Technologies of the Visible," *Speculum* 68 (1993): 390. Cf. Rita Copeland, "Review of the Book Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women," *Speculum* 64 (1989): 143-47.

28. Nicholas Watson, "Desire for the Past" *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 21 (1999): 78-81; Lauwers, "L'expérience béguinale," pp. 61-103. Cf. Amy Hollywood, "Suffering Transformed. Marguerite Porète, Meister Eckhart, and the Problem of Women's Spirituality," in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York, Continuum, 1994), pp. 87-113.

29. Both Kathleen Biddick and Nicholas Watson maintain that Bynum's findings were, in part, structured by her aspiration to create her ideal model of the Middle Ages. However, Watson asserts that there is much to be gained from Bynum's approach. (Watson, "Desire for the Past," p. 60).

30. Petroff, "Introduction"; idem, "Women and Mysticism in the Medieval World," pp. 3-24.

were simply persons who had failed to reach the physical ideal of masculinity. Men and women were not considered intrinsically different: if the ideal conditions of heat and dryness prevailed at the moment of conception, a woman would give birth to a male child; if any fault occurred, an embryo would not be able to become masculine, and would instead be born in female body. A woman, therefore, was a failed man.[33] The limitations of female flesh, many of which had implications for feminine religious behaviour, were simply due to its underdevelopment. Nevertheless, modern scholarship which has examined the role of biology in defining feminine spirituality has yielded significant insight.

Despite their intrinsic similarity to men, the constraints of feminine flesh were significant. The female constitution had less heat and dryness than the male and was therefore prone to an excess of phlegm and black bile, resulting in a propensity to experience both visionary rapture and melancholia, often manifest as lovesickness.[34] These same qualities also increased woman's susceptibility to demonic deceptions. This only increased the importance of even the most virtuous woman, especially a female visionary, having guidance from a constitutionally more perfect and undoubtedly morally superior male. By the high Middle Ages, this role was almost invariably held by a confessor. These clerics initially helped the saints to interpret their visions and often found their own journeys enhanced in the process.[35]

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31. Biddick, "Genders, Bodies, Borders," pp. 389-418; Simons, "Reading a Saint's Body," pp. 10-23.

32. Suydam, "Beguine Textuality," pp. 169-210; McNamara, "Need to Give," pp. 199-221.

33. Cadden, *The Meaning of Sex Difference*, p. 133.

34. Cadden, *The Meaning of Sex Difference*, pp. 184-93; Dyan Elliott, "The Physiology of Rapture and Female Spirituality," in *Medieval Theology and the Natural Body*, ed. Peter Biller and A. J. Minnis (Suffolk: University of York, 1997), pp. 149 n. 36, 157-59.

35. John Coakley, "Friars as Confidants of Holy Women in Medieval Dominican Hagiography," in *Images of Sainthood*, pp. 222-46; idem, "Friars, Sanctity, and Gender: Mendicant Encounters with Saints, 1250-1325," in *Medieval Masculinities*, pp. 91-110; idem, "Gender and the Authority of Friars: The Significance of Holy Women for Thirteenth-Century Franciscans and Dominicans," *Church History* 60 (1991): 445-60.

As both modern scholars and medieval writers depict medieval women as creatures of the flesh, female physiology is often regarded as significant in influencing feminine portrayals of holiness. Physical illness is considered a *topos* in the *lives* of female saints and physical suffering is now considered a central component of what is commonly viewed as "feminine" religious behaviour.[36] Numerous holy women scourged or inflicted pain upon their bodies in attempts to imitate Christ's passion or to make satisfaction for sin. Scholars of feminine devotion have demonstrated the fundamental interdependence between the apparent opposites of flesh and spirit: as the body was integral to religious behaviour.

Despite its obvious limitations, the bodies of medieval women were viewed essentially the same as the bodies of their male counterparts. A virtuous woman was referred to as manly *(virago)* and in some instances, hagiographers depicted their female subjects, notably Perpetua (+203) and Wilgefortis (c.+689), as physically becoming male, and as such, overcoming the limitations of their flesh physically as well as symbolically. As woman was thought of as an underdeveloped man, there was no reason that, being gifted with exceptional grace, she would be prevented from attaining the heights of male virtue.[37]

The fluidity attached to gendered categories dictates that, as is common in modern social and psychoanalytic theory, medieval gender was not exclusively equated with biology; nevertheless, the two cannot entirely be separated. Biology dictated the set

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36. In addition to historical analysis, modern scholars have interpreted the more sensational behaviour in *vitae* of holy women as psychological impairment or mental illness. The most famous example of this is possibly Rudolph Bell's work *Holy Anorexia,* which interprets the behaviour of Italian holy women as Anorexia Nervosa. Barbara Newman takes the same approach to the study of the *mulieres sanctae*. Her examination of the rather extraordinary *life* of Christina of St. Trond begins with a reminder that what was considered possession in the medieval world is now understood as either depression or hysteria. See, Rudolph Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Barbara Newman, "Possessed by the Spirit: Devout Women, Demoniacs, and the Apostolic Life in the Thirteenth Century," *Speculum* 73 (1998): 733-70. This phenomenon is also discussed with reference to other medieval mystics see, Marion Glasscoe, *English Medieval Mystics: Games of Faith* (London and New York: Longman, 1993), pp. 274-75; Nancy Partner, "Reading The Book of Margery Kempe," *Exemplaria* 3 (1991): 29-66..

37. Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 205.

of gendered norms and social roles that all human beings were expected to follow. Masculine social reality was more competitive and public than was its domestic feminine counterpart. Men were more likely to be educated and to hold public roles; women were more likely to be involved with childrearing and food preparation.

It must be pointed out that social reality was not divided solely according to gender binaries: there were no roles fulfilled by all women or by all men. Men of lower social standing were unlikely to be educated; wealthy women did not necessarily busy themselves in the kitchen. While gender has repeatedly shown itself to be important, its significance must not be exaggerated. By overemphasising the role of gender, modern scholars have virtually ignored other factors which contribute to portrayals of holiness in later medieval hagiography.

In her 1947 study, Simone Roisin noted similarities between the spirituality of the *conversi* and the *mulieres sanctae*. As she did not have access to the plethora of subsequent studies on femininity and religious behaviour, she viewed these similarities simply as a consequence of a similar social background.[38] Similarly, recent scholarship shows a trend towards considering the ways in which social and cultural factors influence the ways in which holiness is portrayed. Sharon Farmer has pointed to the significant results that modern social theory has made by examining the sociological influence of categories such as education or social standing. She argues,

> ...multiracial and postcolonial feminists...have argued that gender categories are never constructed along a single axis—a binary with two simple components: male and female. Rather, gendered categories are always constructed within, and in relationship to other categories of differences—such as social status or ethnic or religious difference.[39]

Farmer has used the insights gained from feminist social theory to advance a more nuanced dimension to the debate about the influence of gender. Farmer's findings are echoed

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38. Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 94-98.

39. Sharon Farmer, "The Beggar's Body," p. 153.

in the work of scholars such as Katrien Heene, Steven Kruger and Martha Newman.[40] The work of these scholars has demonstrated that the binary categories ordained by biology were no more universal in medieval society than they are in our own. Medieval men who transgressed the societal norm—those who were non-Christian, criminal, uneducated, or otherwise immoral—were portrayed as being in some ways analogous to women. These underprivileged men lacked societal power and were subject to the control of other men. In a society where power was generally acknowledged as masculine and "femininity" was synonymous with difference, it seems that these men were in some way "feminised."[41]

As the "masculine" has not yet been defined, the equation of femininity simply with difference is unsatisfactory. Understanding, or at this stage, defining, either medieval masculinity or femininity can only be done by examining *topoi* associated with groups of men in conjunction with those associated with their female contemporaries. Given the tremendous insights gained by scholars of women's religious behaviour, this has become more crucial than ever before. As Nancy Partner points out, since many insights have been gained from examining medieval femininity, the "instrument of gender, so central to feminist analysis, cannot sensibly be limited to females and femininity."[42] Given that scholars of social theory generally agree that "masculinity" and "femininity" are abstract constructs that can be defined only in terms of one another, there is much validity in Partner's statement.

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40. Farmer, "The Beggar's Body," pp. 153-71; idem, *Surviving Poverty*, pp. 39-73; Heene, "Deliberate Self-Harm," pp. 213-33; Newman, "'Crucified by the Virtues,'" pp. 182-209; Kruger, "Becoming Christian, Becoming Male?," pp. 21-34. Cf. Sharon Farmer, "Introduction," in *Gender and Difference*, pp. ix-xi; Sara Lipton, "'Tanquam effeminatum' Pedro II of Aragon and the Gendering of Heresy in the Albigensian Crusade," in *Queer Iberia: Sexualities, Cultures and Crossings From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, ed. Josiah Blackmore and Gregory S. Hutchinson (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 113-20; Robert Mills, "A Man is Being Beaten," *New Medieval Literatures* 5, ed. Rita Copeland, David Lawton and Wendy Scase (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 120-24.

41. Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 9-21, 155-62.

42. Nancy Partner, "Studying Medieval Women: Sex, Gender, and Feminism," *Speculum* 68 (1993): 307-08.

It would seem that other scholars agree. In 1991, Richard Kieckhefer pointed out that because of the recent study on feminine religious devotion, it was now possible to explore "men's religion as men's religion." At the same time, Kieckhefer stated that a companion volume to *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* would be a valuable contribution to the study of gender and religious behaviour.[43] In the thirteen years since Kieckhefer made this statement understanding of medieval masculine devotion has improved, though not dramatically. Although gender studies of masculinity are no longer unheard of, when viewed in conjunction with the attention that has been devoted to feminine religious behaviour in the Middle Ages, the dearth of gender studies on medieval masculinity is surprising.

It is often forgotten that in the aforementioned article, "...And Woman His Humanity" Bynum identified both masculine and feminine attributes. Given the insight gained from exploring the feminine qualities that Bynum named and their role in women's devotional practice it is possible that examining the corresponding masculine attributes—intellect, judgement, reason and order—and analysing their role in the devotional climate of the high Middle Ages could yield similar insight. Bynum's work on femininity has other implications for examining the devotional ideals of medieval masculinity.

While Bynum was not the first to suggest that women expressed religious devotion differently from their male contemporaries, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* was revolutionary in that it showed the way a particular and prominent symbol played a clearly defined role in the spirituality of women. A more nuanced understanding of the allegorical and tropological meanings of food imagery allowed greater insight into its purpose in didactic literature and its meaning to medieval persons of both genders. Through delineating the role of food

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43. Richard Kieckhefer, "Holiness and the Culture of Devotion: Remarks on Some Medieval Male Saints," in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, p. 291.

in feminine religious practice, Bynum enabled significant insight into later medieval devotion. At the same time, she provided justification for at least questioning the existence of a similarly influential symbol for masculine devotion and the *lives* of men. Similarly, Bynum's work shows that it is possible to gain considerable insight into medieval religious practices from analysing devotional themes. As is discussed above, this has been applied to the *lives* of medieval women, but its potential for unravelling the secrets of medieval masculine devotion remain largely unexplored.

Although the masculine aspects of the devotional practices of medieval men remain shrouded in mystery, "masculinity" has traditionally been regarded to be hegemonic, that is a cultural norm or ideal. In the medieval terrestrial hierarchy, man's superiority over woman was undisputed. This tenet was frequently reinforced in language, in history, and through biology, to such an extent that its divine origins could not easily be questioned. Medieval understanding of male physiology dictated that the masculine was the formative principle in the generation of offspring. It was therefore logical that men were guardians of their families. Medieval social norms—drawing upon classical custom—went so far as to equate masculinity, specifically uncircumcised Christian masculinity, with virtue.[44] Man's supremacy over woman was also innate in the Latin language: as the influential encyclopaedist Isidore of Seville recounts, man *(vir)* earns his name from his strength and moral rectitude *(virtus)*, while woman *(mulier)* is so-called on account of her pliancy *(mollis)* and weakness *(mollia)*.[45] Woman was delicate, pliant and weak. Not only did her

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44. Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch*, passim; Kruger, "Becoming Christian, Becoming Male?," pp. 21-34. For a general discussion of social constructed masculinity see, Vern Bullough, "On Being Male in the Middle Ages," in *Medieval Masculinities*, pp. 31-38.

45. Isidore of Seville, "Etymologiarum," c. 11, par. 17-18, PL vol. 82, col. 417. The Villers library included a copy of *The Etymologies* (Falmagne, "La spécificité de la bibliothèque de Villers," p. 105). Cf. Alcuin Blamires, "Paradox in the Medieval Gender Doctrine of Head and Body," in *Medieval Theology and the Natural Body*, pp. 13-30; Bullough, "On Being Male," pp. 32-33.

frail physiology render her physical body vulnerable, but it also left her exposed to spiritual attack.[46] Man's obligation to guard woman was similarly reinforced in that she had caused the fall of the human race through her gullibility.[47]

The equation of manliness with moral rectitude was somewhat problematic and has implications for defining medieval masculinity. Men were, by nature, human and therefore very seldom embodied all virtuous ideals. Moreover, male physiology proved more useful than female in providing physical protection, seducing women and begetting offspring. As the "manly" Christian, often a celibate ascetic, could not openly fulfil these roles it is clear that more than one definition of masculinity was necessary. What is unclear is the way in which the ideal developed and how it was applied to holy men in medieval society. This thesis addresses the question of a masculine ideal as it applies to hagiography in medieval Liège.

As of yet, there has been little exploration of the development of masculine devotion. Instead, most work on the connection between maleness and men has focussed on male sexuality rather than social constructions of masculinity.[48] Scholars have not failed to point out the revolutionary changes instigated by Gregorian Reform. The imposition of mandatory celibacy on a sizable percentage of previously marriageable men had implications for the social order. Its repercussions were felt with regards to Church property; the role of women in the Church as well as individual self-perceptions of

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46. Cadden, *Meaning of Sex Difference*, pp. 184-93; Elliott, "Physiology of Rapture," pp. 148, 157-73.

47. For a discussion of woman's connection with the fall see, Margaret R. Miles, *Carnal Knowledge* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), pp. 85-116.

48. For further discussion the relationship between celibacy and masculinity see P. H. Cullum, "Clergy, Masculinity and Transgression in Late Medieval Europe," in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, pp. 178-96. There is a significant body of scholarship that focuses on the ways in which Gregorian reform affected Canon Law. See James A. Brundage, "Carnal delight: Canonistic theories of Sexuality," *Sex, Law and Marriage in the Middle Ages* (Norfolk: Variorum, 1993), pp. 369-70; idem. "Sexuality, Marriage and the Reform of Christian Society in the Thought of Gregory VII," in *Sex, Law and Marriage*, pp. 69-73.

manliness.[49] R. N. Swanson points out that a newly celibate clergy could not fulfil socially defined masculine roles.[50] To Swanson, it was necessary to create, "a third gender." Swanson's analysis attempts to codify a new definition of "clerical masculinity," through which physically and emotionally male beings endeavoured to live as "angels."[51] Predictably, Swanson discovers that the aspiring angels never realised their goal. Instead of exploring other expressions of clerical or even simply Christian masculinity, Swanson simply concludes that a "masculine" clergy—"legitimately fathers and heads of families"— did not exist until the Reformation.[52]

Swanson's study endeavours to transpose a secular model of masculinity on men who separated themselves from the secular world. His idea of the clergy endeavouring to become angels is more interesting; however, it presupposes that an integral part of clerical celibacy was the renunciation of masculinity, which it equates with reproduction. Just as femininity comprises more than physical motherhood, the ability to reproduce is only part of what makes a man masculine. Thematic studies of the devotional practices of medieval women have delineated various themes—nurturing, compassion—as "feminine." There has been little thematic study of the *vitae* of holy men. As such, there has been no effort made to find corresponding themes in the *vitae* of male saints. This thesis begins such a discussion. Even a cursory glance at the Villers corpus reveals that devotional practices of holy men are in some ways similar to, but at the same time distinct from the practices of their female contemporaries. However, before it is possible either to label devotional

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49. Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); McNamara, "The *Herrenfrage*," pp. 6-12.

50. R. N. Swanson, "Angels Incarnate: Clergy and Masculinity From Gregorian Reform to Reformation," in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. D. M. Hadley (London & New York: Longman, 1999), pp. 160-61.

51. Swanson, "Angels Incarnate," pp. 170-71.

52. Swanson, "Angels Incarnate," pp. 176-77.

practices "masculine" or to identify the significance of a particular practice to male spirituality, it is necessary to examine didactic literature which portrays men in some detail.

Many modern scholars regard sexual purity as integral to feminine religious practice. However, explorations of the effects of mandatory clerical celibacy should correct the notion that only women were expected to abstain from sexual relations. It is also important to keep in mind that the idealisation of male sexual abstinence did not begin with Gregory VII. In his influential *The Body in Society,* Peter Brown examines the practices of continence, celibacy and virginity in the first four centuries of Christianity.[53] Brown's work touches upon the importance of such ideals to both men and women in Christian society. Moreover, *The Body in Society* has shown that virginity and the sexual purity, which many scholars see as exclusively connected with the feminine, were valued, for and by, holy men in the early Church.[54] An earlier, 1975, study by John Bugge has shown that the emphasis on masculine sexual purity that, as Brown later demonstrated, was prevalent in early Christianity, continued to be influential in later medieval monastic ideals. However later medieval writings which concern holy men are generally thought to place more emphasis on chastity after entering the religious life than on virginity.[55] His work, *Virginitas: An Essay in the History of a Medieval Ideal,* demonstrates both that virginity had been valued throughout Christian history, and, as is so often thought characteristic of holy women, the virginal man, as a *miles Christi,* was thought to have overcome the inherent

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53. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. xiii-xx.

54. Brown, *Body and Society,* passim.

55. John Bugge, *Virginitas: An Essay in the History of a Medieval Ideal* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975). For an emphasis on chastity as opposed to virginity see, Donald Weinstein and Rudolph Bell, *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 73-99; Lynne Alexandra Griffin, "*Ex Exemplis Illustribus:* The Influence of Gender on the *Vitae Fratrum* and the *Vitae Sororum*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2003), pp. 123-27. Cf. John H. Arnold, "The Labour of Continence: Masculinity and Clerical Virginity," in *Medieval Virginities,* ed. Anke Bernau, Ruth Evans and Sarah Salih (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 102-14.

weaknesses of his flesh and to have begun to achieve Christian perfection.[56] The sexuality portrayed in the Villers *vitae* is discussed later in this thesis; however, as the aim of this thesis is exploring devotional themes, any discussion of sexuality is largely peripheral.

Like masculinity in general, the masculinity of Christ has been largely tied to his sexuality. Leo Steinberg's controversial study, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and Modern Oblivion,* explores representations of Christ's maleness, as demonstrated by artistic representations of his genitals in depictions of his passion and death in art from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century.[57] Steinberg's thesis was radical, and his work attracted both the praise and criticism of many.[58] In history, like modern social theory, male sexuality is thought to play an integral role in the formation of masculine ideals.[59]

The focus of sexuality at the expense of thematic studies on the *vitae* of holy men does not result from a lack of knowledge about themes that are prominent in men's *lives.* Scholars have observed that the prominent themes in these *lives* are different from the *vitae* of their female contemporaries: both Bynum and Roisin have noted the prominence of

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56. Bugge, *Virginitas,* pp. 30-83. Cf. Jacqueline Murray, "'The law of sin that is in my members' : The problems of Male Embodiment," in *Gender and Holiness: Men Women and Saints in late Medieval Europe,* ed. Sarah Salih and Samantha J. E. Riches (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 9-22.

57. Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

58. Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Body of Christ in the later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg," *Renaissance Quarterly* 39 (1986): 403.

59. Hans Urs von Balthazar compares the sacrifice of the Eucharist to the male orgasm (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Elucidations* tr. John Riches (London: SPCK, 1975), p. 150); Tina Beattie reads the same into modern interpretations of the Mass (Tina Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate: A Gynocentric Refiguration of Marian Symbolism in Engagement with Luce Irigaray,* (Bristol, Universty of Bristol, 1999), p. 65). It is true that writings such as Bernard's sermons on the Song of Songs or Hadewijch's poetry contain undeniably erotic elements; however, such texts draw upon a rich tradition of allegorical and mystical writings in which the bride, that is, the human soul, expresses a yearning for union with God (E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); Stephen D. Moore, "The Song of Songs in the History of Sexuality," *Church History* 69 (2000): 328-32). As Denys Turner has shown, this multifaceted language encompassed many truths—allegorical, tropological, historical and analogical—rendering a literal, or purely sexual interpretation meaningless (Denys Turner, *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis on the Song of Songs.* Cistercian Publications: Kalamazoo, 1992).

Marian devotion in the *vitae* and writings of holy men, but have not advanced any explanation.[60] In one of the few existing studies of Marian devotion in the *vitae* of male saints, Michael Carroll has examined masculine devotion to the Virgin. Instead of examining the historical context, Carroll's examination was carried out with reference to Freudian theory. Carroll points out that as both the mother of the King of Heaven and, as a result of Gregorian reform, simply as a woman, the Virgin was unattainable. In Carroll's analysis, instead of desiring their own mothers (as would accord with Freudian theory) religious men often transferred sexual fantasies and desires to the spiritual realm.[61] This theory is appealing in its simplicity, but makes no reference to the social or religious context of the period. Devotion to the Mother of God, like any religious expression, fulfils a social function and can only be understood in view of the multifarious context from which it emerged. Explaining it in terms of the psychology of individual men reveals nothing of its broader social implications, and is at best reductionist.[62]

This thesis endeavours to use the methodology that Bynum advanced in *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* to examine medieval masculinity. From an analysis of the Villers corpus, it became evident that four themes were prominent in the constructions of holiness: conversion, visionary experiences, Marian devotion and chivalry. Like *Holy Feast and Holy*

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60. Roisin, *L'hagiographie,* pp. 108, 111-13; Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 141, 162. Cf. Griffin, *"Ex Exemplis Illustribus,"* pp. 140-43, 313-19.

61. Michael Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 22-48, 115-47. Cf. Wiethaus, "Christian Piety," pp. 52-57.

62. It is not only the devotees of the Blessed Virgin that have been discussed as a product of their own psychology conflicting with medieval sexual mores. In her reading of Guibert of Nogent's *Monodiae,* Nancy Partner advances the theory that Guibert was suffering the effects of an Oedipal complex. Partner approached the *Monodiae* using "psychoanalytic exegesis" to read "the symbolic tropes of...the reverse grammar of unadmitted desire." In her analysis, Partner used only the works of Freud to analyse what she felt were Freudian motifs. For this reason, her conclusions are far from surprising (Nancy Partner, "The Family Romance of Guibert of Nogent: His Story/Her Story," in *Medieval Mothering,* ed. John Cami Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1996), pp. 359-79. Cf. Johnathan Kantor, "A Psycho-Historical Source: The Memoirs of Abbot Guibert of Nogent," *Journal of Medieval History* 2 (1976): 281-304).

Fast, this thesis first presents the evidence and places it in context. It then proceeds to examine each theme first in the *vitae* of men, and then in respect to the ways in which the biological sex of the saint influences the ways in which his or her holiness is portrayed.

Source Material

As its source material, this thesis relies primarily upon hagiography: a genre only recently redeemed from the rubbish-heap of spurious legend. In recent years, hagiography has become more widely understood and has attracted considerable interest. This interest is shown in that hagiography is becoming a popular subject of study: the classic work of the Bollandist scholar René Aigrain has been reprinted and Guy Philippart is compiling a major guide to hagiographic scholarship..[63] Scholars such as Felice Lifshitz, Thomas Head, Alison Elliott and Thomas Hefferman have explored the hagiographers' intent in composing *vitae* and have thus facilitated greater understanding of the genre of hagiography.[64] Moreover the recent work of André Vauchez, Michel Lauwers, Donald Weinstein and Rudolph Bell have accentuated the importance of understanding of the qualities that society recognises as worthy of veneration.[65]

As *vitae* were often repeated in a public forum or directed toward a lay audience, they are often considered "popular" religious texts. However, learned churchmen typi-

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63. René Aigrain, *L'hagiographie: ses sources - ses méthodes - son histoire* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 2000); *Hagiographies. Histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1500,* ed. Guy Philippart, 4 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 1994-present).

64. Lifshitz, "Beyond Positivism and Genre," pp. 95-113; Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints;* Alison Goddard Elliott, *Roads to Paradise: Reading the Lives of the Early Saints* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987); Thomas Heffernan, "Christian Biography: Foundation to Maturity," in *Historiography in the Middle Ages,* ed. Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (Leiden and Boston: Brill Publishers, 2003), pp. 115-54; idem, *Sacred Biography.*

65. André Vauchez, *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age: d'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1988); Michael Lauwers, "L'institution et le genre. À propos de l'accès des femmes au sacré dans l'Occident," *Clio, Histoire, Femmes et Sociétés* 2 (1995): 279-317; idem, "Récits hagiographiques, pouvoir et institutions dans l'occident médiéval," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 95 (2000): 71-96; Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society.*

cally composed hagiographic texts in order that they might instruct their audiences in a particular point of doctrine and *vitae* were often relayed in sermon format. The *vita* of St. Radegund (c. +587) illustrates the charitable duty of a benevolent ruler; the life of Christina of St. Trond serves as a virtual sermon on purgatorial piety, and the *exemplum* of Theophilius, the deacon who repented that he had sold his soul to Satan and regained it through the Virgin's intercession, emphasises the mercy and power of Mary. As a collection of ideals, hagiography provides an opportunity to examine the prescribed devotional practices of any particular period. Rather than being concerned with the historical veracity of the marvels he described—miraculous lactation, levitation or fasts which exceeded human capabilities—the hagiographer was concerned with providing tales which would both edify and astound his audience.[66] *Vitae* were comprised of a series of *topoi*, or recognisable pious acts, which served as veritable catalogues of exemplary religious behaviour. Through Catherine of Siena (+1380) exchanging hearts with Christ, Lutgard of Aywières suckling from his wounds, Henry of Suso's shirt of nails or Bernard of Clairvaux immersing himself in water at the first stirrings of lust, we are able to form a surprisingly clear picture of medieval devotional ideals. These incidents illustrate the medieval importance of chastity and union with the divine—though the practices themselves may, understandably, have been confined to hagiography.

Admittedly, it is more difficult to use hagiography as a source of narrative history. There is some ambiguity in the relationship between the dates of Bernard's death and the circulation of his *vita* and the *vita Abundi* speaks of Abundus' historically impossible

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66. Head, *Hagiography*, pp. 2-3; Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, pp. 19-28; David Townsend, "Hagiography," *Medieval Latin*, ed. A .G. Rigg & F. A. C. Mantello (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), p. 618.

nephew.[67] One must keep in mind that, unlike *chronicae*—which claimed to be historically factual accounts—*vitae* were concerned with providing examples of the ways in which ethical or religious truth could be incorporated into daily life. While this by no means dismisses hagiography as a scholarly source, it means that it cannot be approached using the methods which allow historians to access the facts of the past. Instead, it must be understood in its own right: as a catalogue of religious behaviour.

While hagiography is now generally regarded as a legitimate subject of study, the precise value of *vitae* is still a matter of debate. In particular, scholars are divided as to whether *vitae* were a codification of devotional practice, or an attempt to promote certain forms of religious behaviour. Bynum used *vitae* as a major source for identifying food as a prominent symbol in women's spirituality. Michel Lauwers questions her findings, and asserts that food and food-related practices were simply promoted as an ideal that the women's hagiographers believed should hold a central role in their devotion. The distinction between the prescriptive and descriptive function of *vitae* is not a matter of concern to the questions addressed in the present thesis. Instead, its aim is to compare the effect of gender on these portrayals of religious ideals. Whether or not these ideals were put into practice is irrelevant.

Despite the existence of printed editions, many problems result from the absence of a critical edition. For this reason, the printed texts have been checked against all but four manuscripts, which have been inaccessible.[68] In all cases but one, the content of the print-

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67. Bredero, *Bernard of Clairvaux*, pp. 39-42. After devoting tremendous attention to the fact that Abundus' siblings entered the religious life (VAB c. 1, p. 13), his hagiographer recounts an incident that involves Abundus' nephew (VAB c. 16, p. 28). It is possible that Abundus had siblings other than those discussed in his *vitae*, or that his sister who became a nun later in life had, at some point, married or given birth to an illegitimate child. Either possibility reinforces the idea that Abundus' hagiographer was not concerned with reporting detail.

68. Pamplona, Archivo General de Navarra, Ms. Var. II; Pamplona, Archivo General de Navarra, Ms. Var. XI; Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale, 1434; Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Ser. N. 12710 (For a comprehensive study of the manuscripts assocaited with Villers see, Falmage, *Un texte en Contexte*. For details of all manuscripts consulted, see Appendix B to this thesis).

ed text differed only slightly from the manuscript; however, in the *vita Simonis*, the only extant manuscript bears very little resemblance to the seventeenth-century printed edition. I have therefore considered the manuscript edition of the *vita Simonis* and the edited *vita Simonis* as two separate texts.

Many of the similarities between the Villers texts and the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* are linguistic. For this reason, despite accessible modern vernacular translations of some *vitae*, particularly those of the *mulieres sanctae*, the analysis in this thesis has focussed on the Latin text. Translations found throughout the thesis are my own, unless otherwise acknowledged.

Throughout the thesis, references are made to the statutes of the Cistercian Chapter General. The statues that are cited are those edited by Joseph Canivez in 1938, which Louis Lekai calls "the most important undertaking" of twentieth-century Cistercian studies.[69] References to statutes in the twelfth century have been checked against Waddell's critical edition.[70] As Waddell's scope extends only to 1201, this thesis relies primarily on Canivez's statutes while Waddell's edition is used as an additional reference where appropriate.

Definitions

Throughout this thesis, the words "saints" and "sainthood" are used, but do not refer exclusively to those recognised by Rome as meriting official canonisation. The process of canonisation was defined in the twelfth century, but was neither the only nor the most significant factor in defining saints' cults in the later Middle Ages. Instead, "saints" and

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69. *Statuta capitulorum generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis*, 1116-1786, 8 vols., ed. Joseph M. Canivez (Louvain: Bureaux de la Revue, 1933). Hereafter this work is referred to as *Statuta*. Cf. Louis J. Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1977), p. 212. Constance Berman has pointed out that the dating of the statutes is somewhat problematic; however, Chrysogonus Waddell provides assurance that her concerns are exaggerated (Berman, "Appendix I. Chronological Summary," *The Cistercian Evolution*, pp. 237-41; Waddell, "The Myth of Cistercian Origins," pp. 299-386).

70. *Twelfth-century Statutes from the Cistercian Chapter General: Latin Text with English Notes and Commentary*; ed. Chrysogonus Waddell (Brecht: Citeaux: Commentarii Cisterciensis, 2002).

"sanctity," in this thesis, refer simply those who were recognised either by their religious or secular community as examples of the perfect Christian life.[71] While the subjects of this thesis were, obviously, less influential than Bernard of Clairvaux or Thomas Aquinas, their stories were repeated and recorded, indicating that they were believed to include tales that men and women—their confrères or contemporaries—could relate to.

Many of the individuals described in this thesis are, despite obvious connections with the Cistercian Order, referred to throughout as "lay saints" or examples of "lay sanctity." The term "lay" can be used in various ways, and here, I divide the population of medieval *Christifideles* according to whether or not they had received the sacrament of orders. Hence, a "lay saint" in this thesis is a non-ordained individual who may or may not be affiliated with a religious order.

Another term that is used throughout this thesis is "spirituality." This word, the Latin roots of which meant simply "breath," or "breathing," has been used in varying ways to describe everything from the journey towards God to a set of personal beliefs and values.[72] From patristic times onwards, the adjective *spiritalis* was used in opposition to *carnalis*, to signify things removed from this world.[73] This distinction is somewhat ambiguous: any behaviour which intrinsically involved the physical realm was soon referred to as "spiritual" if it had divine ends. Rather than attempting to navigate the distinctions and

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71. Head, *Hagiography*, pp. 1-3; Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 13-22. George Ferzoco cites the example of Robert of Moselme, whom the Cistercians regarded as a saint although he was not approved for official canonisation (George Ferzoco, "Sermon Literature Concerning Late Medieval Saints," in *Models of Holiness in Medieval Sermons*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle et. al. *Textes et Études du Moyen Age* 5 (Fédération Internationale d'Études Médiévales: Louvain-la-Neuve, 1996), pp. 105-06, esp. p. 105 n. 8.

72. *Lewis and Short* s. v. *spiritus -us; spiritalis*, p. 1743, col. A-C.

73. Aimé Solignac, "Spiritualité: le mot et l'histoire," in *DS* vol. 14, cc. 1142-1160.

nuances of the term, this thesis uses it in a very definite sense: outward manifestations of belief and values—in other words, lived religious behaviour.[74]

Throughout the thesis, I refer to "the high Middle Ages," which is a time period with somewhat flexible boundaries among medievalists. In this thesis, "the high Middle Ages" refers to the period between the late twelfth and early fourteenth century. The subjects of the Villers *vitae* and the *lives* of the *mulieres sanctae* lived in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The *vitae* of both groups were recorded shortly after the deaths of their subjects between 1213 and 1268.

As is mentioned above, the term "feminine spirituality," as it is generally understood in modern scholarship is problematic. This thesis discusses many of the devotional practices which comprise this so-called feminine spirituality—somatic devotion, concern for the souls in purgatory, visionary experiences and physical asceticism. In each instance, the thesis refers to specific practices rather than placing them under the rubric of "feminine devotion." The many studies on women's religious behaviour give little or no attention to the way somatic or sensual themes are portrayed in the *vitae* of contemporary male saints. This thesis endeavours to explore the *vitae* of male and female saints and to address the question of a masculine or feminine spirituality. Until many studies of this type have been completed, the terms masculine or feminine spirituality should not be seen as conclusive.

It is, at times, as is also discussed earlier, difficult to separate the concepts of biological sex and gender. Biology does not create social reality, but biological limitations often dictate social roles. As is mentioned above, this thesis acknowledges the fluidity with which gendered language and imagery are used in medieval texts. At the same time, it acknowledges a need for both further exploration of the *vitae* of non-elite medieval holy

74. André Vauchez, *The Spirituality of the Medieval West*, tr. Collette Friedlander (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1993), p. 9.

men and more importantly for a preliminary construction of a masculine devotional language which may be most easily found in the *vitae* of male saints.

The saints described in this thesis were also united by an affiliation with the Cistercian Order: for the brothers and some of the women, official membership; for many of the *mulieres sanctae* the connection is somewhat tenuous. The Cistercian Order had considerable influence in Liège. The majority of Liègeois religious houses followed some version of Cistercian custom and the order held considerable amounts of land in the diocese.[75] More details of the various Cistercian vocations are included in Chapter One of this thesis.

Cistercian scholars have identified prominent themes in the *vitae* of the high Middle Ages—eucharistic devotion or physical asceticism—as evidence of "Cistercian" spirituality. Certainly, the preponderance of devotion to the Virgin was in keeping with the ideals of the Cistercian fathers. However, it is important to recall that the Cistercian "Order" was a product of Benedictine reform. Though its houses followed a uniform set of regulations, and it had an authoritative governing body, the same uniformity is not clear with regard to devotional practices. While Cistercian writers repeatedly emphasise themes such as devotion to the Blessed Virgin or the Eucharist, these forms of religious expression are easily identifiable with the religious mores of the time. As further evidence that it is difficult to label these aspects of religious practice as Cistercian, they were similarly popular with Carthusians and Dominicans. It is evident that the Cistercians in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century did not hold to the precepts of the early Cistercians, particularly in regards to separation from the secular world.[76]

75. Frederic van der Meer, *Atlas de l'ordre cistercien* (Paris: Sequoia, 1965).

76. The men and women whose *lives* are discussed in this thesis were influenced by the Cistercian Order and it is certain that many of the *vitae* depict Cistercian religious ideals. As the purpose of this thesis is to examine the role of gender in influencing portrayals of holiness, it does not address Cistercian influence. The questions surrounding thirteenth-century Cistercian ideals are significant and constitute material for a separate study.

Questions of audience are always somewhat difficult. Both groups of *vitae* were composed in Latin. The *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* were translated into a number of vernaculars—including English, French, Dutch and Norwegian—but there is no record of a premodern vernacular version of any of the Villers *vitae.* There are also more extant copies of the *vitae mulierum,* which are of varied origin, indicating that the *lives* quite probably attained greater popularity throughout Europe. All manuscripts of the Villers *vitae,* with the exception of the *vita Arnulfi,* originate from Villers or Aulne indicating that they were probably intended for a monastic audience. Whatever the intention, it is certain that the two groups of *vitae* were familiar to monastic communities. The catalogue for the Villers library at the beginning of the fourteenth century contains copies of more than one Villers *vita,* as well as copies of some *vitae mulierum.* There are copies of both groups of *vitae* with a Villers provenance. Any attempt to reconstruct the audience beyond the Villers community would be, at this point, purely speculative.

Overview

The approach of this thesis is cumulative. In addition to making its own contribution, each chapter provides the necessary context for the chapters that follow. Chapter One introduces the subjects and the manuscript tradition of the Villers corpus. It presents a synopsis of the themes in the much-studied *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* as well as more detailed biographies of the Villers brothers which have been constructed from hagiographic material, the archives of Villers and contemporary chronicles. The biographical synopsis of the *life* of each brother touches upon and identifies major devotional themes, but neither expounds upon them in detail nor attempts to place them in their religious context. Such discussion is the focus of later chapters. Simply describing the *vitae* of the Villers brothers makes it obvious that there are devotional similarities between the holy men and women

of thirteenth-century Liège; however, this chapter goes on to provide additional justification for examining these two groups of *vitae* in conjunction with one another. It presents the closely linked codicological tradition of the manuscripts of the *vitae*, as well as the social interaction between the Liègeois *sancti* and *sanctae* during their earthly existence.

Chapter Two focuses on the wider spiritual context from which these *vitae* emerged. From an examination of the Villers corpus, four major themes emerge as having a dominant role in the religious behaviour of the subjects: conversion, visionary experiences, Marian devotion and the crusading ideal. Before it is possible to determine the extent to which gender influenced the ways in which these themes were portrayed, it is necessary to examine the role of these themes in the context of the spiritual climate of the high Middle Ages. Chapter Two examines the role of these four themes in the cultural macrocosm of Western Europe in the High Middle Ages. This discussion facilitates the thematic discussion of their role in the *vitae* that is the focus of Chapter Three and eventually the relevance to gendered devotion discussed in Chapter Four.

Chapter Three focuses on the role that the themes outlined in Chapter One play in the Villers *vitae*. This chapter presents the accounts illustrating the importance of conversion, visionary experiences, Marian devotion and chivalry. It then analyses the role of these forms of devotion both in the spiritual development of the individual subject and in relation to Rheno-Mosan devotion. Traditionally, the *vitae* of holy men have been used to supplement information gathered elsewhere, but are considered dubious in their own right. At best they are sources of influential legend: Bernard immersing himself in water at the first sign of lust, or Francis of Assisi preaching to the birds. The devotional themes that were important to male saints or their hagiographers have seldom been examined.

In Chapter Three, the themes discussed are not explicitly named as masculine. The question of gendered spirituality is addressed in Chapter Four. This final chapter presents

a discussion and gendered analysis of the spirituality portrayed in Liègeoise hagiography. In so doing, it both expounds upon the trends noted in Chapter Three, and discusses the ways in which these themes of masculine religious behaviour compare with the quintessential feminine religious behaviour. Comparing spiritual themes in the *vitae* of male and female saints allows analysis of the role that gender plays in forming devotional ideals. In addition, it addresses the other influences on religious behaviour, such as level of education or social and ecclesiastical status. Chapter Four isolates the devotional practices in which gender appears to be a decisive factor and considers the ways in which specific forms of devotion are influenced by the masculinity or femininity of their subject. By so doing, this thesis endeavours to add a new dimension to the debates surrounding gender and holiness. Moreover, it endeavours to augment the fledgling understanding of the relationship between sanctity and medieval masculinity.

Chapter One: The Villers Corpus and its Textual and Codicological Relationship to the Liègeoise *Mulieres Sanctae:* Justification for the Villers Corpus as Exemplary of Medieval Masculinity

The present chapter introduces the subjects of the Villers *vitae* and discusses their connection with the Liègeoise *mulieres sanctae.* It emphasises both the codicological relationship between the two groups of texts and the interaction between their subjects. In doing so, this chapter provides a necessary context for comparison of the two groups of *vitae*. As scholars have viewed the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* as examples of feminine spirituality, the relationship between these women and the brothers who are the focus of this thesis justifies using the Villers *vitae* to study medieval masculinity.

The sketches presented below are intended to introduce the Villers brothers. It presents both brief biographical sketches and summaries of the *vitae* for the Villers abbots, monks and then *conversi.* For the abbots and monks this discussion simply presents historical background and biographical details; for the *lives* of the *conversi,* it discusses the ways in which the lay brother was portrayed in early Cistercian documents and places the subjects of the *vitae* in the context of the traditional understanding of Cistercian lay brothers.

The Villers Brothers

The Liègeois saints discussed in this thesis are all connected with the Cistercian Order. The majority of Liègeois religious houses followed some version of Cistercian custom and the Order held considerable amounts of land in the diocese.[1] Villers and its sisterhouse Aulne were both daughters of Clairvaux and became economic and devotional centres in thirteenth-century Liège. Established in the early twelfth century, Villers had grown from a tiny house of twelve monks, five lay brothers and a single abbot, to a thriving communi-

1. Meer, *Atlas de l'ordre cistercien.*

ty comprised of over one hundred monks, an abbot and over three hundred lay brothers.[2] The original building had been replaced and in addition to the grounds of its main abbey, Villers owned a series of grange farms. Aulne was established as a Benedictine community and was less influential than Villers in the twelfth-century. Nevertheless, by the early thirteenth century, it had grown in influence and shown a similar pattern of growth to Villers, which was also typical of Cistercian houses of this time.[3]

The eleven holy men whose *vitae* are the focus of this thesis were products of the same religious environment in that they were influenced by Cistercian devotion and Liègeois social and political circumstances. The existing manuscripts of their *vitae*, for the most part, originate from the southern Low Countries. Specifically, most of the *vitae* originate from the Villers scriptorium.[4] The *Chronica villariensis*, a text detailing the history of Villers and of the illustrious members of the community, presents a brief biographical sketch, or *vitula*, for many of the men discussed in this thesis. The Cistercian community added to the *Chronica* well into the seventeenth century; however, the *vitulae* of the brothers from the high Middle Ages were neither abridged nor omitted. The extant manuscript copies of the *Chronica villariensis* primarily date from the early modern period; however, there are copies of this text of varied origin, from as early as the thirteenth and as late as the nineteenth centuries.[5]

In addition to the *Chronica*, the brothers whose *vitae* comprise the Villers corpus are depicted as a group on a seventeenth-century engraving, "The Sun of Villers." Two existing copies of the "Sun" are preserved in modern Cistercian houses. The first is an eigh-

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2. Ernest de Moreau, *L'abbaye de Villers-en-Brabant au XIIe et XIIIe siècles.* Brussels: Librarie Albert Dewit, 1909), pp. 3, 17. Cf. G. Boulemont, *Descriptions Comparatives des abbayes de Villers, Aulne et Maredsous* (Namur: 1896), p. 112.

3. Claude Demoulin, *Aulne et son domaine* (Califice: Charleroi, 1980), pp. 72-82.

4. Falmagne, "La spécificité de la bibliothèque," p. 87.

5. There are three copies of this manuscript in Brussels: BR 4459-70, 7761-7781; one in Vienna, ÖNB 12708-09 (Series N.); and one in London, BL MS. Add. 25053 (seventeenth-century).

teenth-century painted image in Westmalle Abbey, Belgium. This is thought to have been inspired by the second, a seventeenth-century engraving in a Cistercian abbey in Quebec, Canada.[6] At the centre of the sun, and indeed the entire Cistercian world, is Bernard of Clairvaux. The rays that extend from his glow include the men who are referred to throughout this thesis as "the Villers brothers." The "Sun" also depicts men from other Cistercian houses who were affiliated with the Villers community, significantly Simon and Werricus of Aulne and Walter of Birbech. It is curious that although the two extant copies of the "Sun" originated in the early modern period, the "Sun's" focus is still holy men from the high Middle Ages, and no later additions have been made. The existence of the "Sun of Villers" and the continued copying of the *villariensis Chronica* show that the men referred to in this thesis as "the Villers brothers" were both influential and venerated as a group throughout the later medieval and early modern period.[7]

The association of these men with the house of Villers is the first justification for considering these *vitae* as a group. This explanation is strengthened when one considers the inclusion of the biographical sketches of these men in the *Chronica villariensis* throughout the medieval and early modern period and the artistic representation the aforementioned "Sun" of Villers. Three men discussed in this thesis did not live their vocations in Villers: Walter of Birbech, Werricus of Aulne and Simon of Aulne. These men are included in this thesis as contemporary textual evidence indicates that their *vitae* were influential among Cistercians in the southern Low Countries. Moreover, textual and artistic representations link them to the house of Villers. The devotional themes stressed in their

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6. Jacques Pineault and Thomas Coomans, "Le 'Soleil de Villers,' cycle iconographique Cistercien du XVIIe siècle" *Cîteaux* 45 (1994): 121-51.

7. It is thought that the "Soleil de Villers" was inspired by the almost-contemporary hagiographic project undertaken by Chrysostomus Henriquez (Chrysostomus Henriquez, *Menologium cisterciense notationibus illustratum...*" (Anvers: Plantin, 1630)). While this may be plausible, there is no convincing explanation for why the artist chose to ignore many of the saints that Henriquez includes in his *Menologium*, and focuses exclusively on the holy men from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

vitae reflect the dominant devotional practices of the Villers corpus: Marian devotion is prevalent in the *vita* of Walter, visionary experiences and charity are prevalent in the *lives* of Werricus and Simon. The inclusion of Walter and Werricus is justified in that these men were prominent among Cistercians in Liège and there is considerable textual and thematic evidence linking their *vitae* to Villers. Moreover, the *vitae* of Walter and Werricus are included in codices containing *vitae* from Villers.[8] By even a cursory glance at the prominent devotional themes stressed in the Villers *vitae*, it becomes obvious that much can be gained from a comparison with the *mulieres sanctae*.

Vitae Abbatum

Charles of Villers: Charles, the one-time prior of Heisterbach, became the eighth abbot of Villers in 1197 and remained in that post until 1209. His hagiographer is unidentified, however, his use of language and intimate knowledge of Villers suggests that he was a member of the community at the time of Charles' abbacy.[9] Before entering the Cistercian Order, Charles had been a powerful figure: his sharp mind, influential family, and the contacts he had made while studying in Paris had helped further both his reputation and his military career. Despite, or perhaps because of his secular success, Charles soon began to view the secular world as empty and he yearned for the permanent riches that came only from God.[10]

8. Walter of Birbech is mentioned explicitly in the *life* of Charles of Villers (VCV c. 1, par. 4, p. 977). A manuscript version of the *vita Waltarii* mentions a Villers monk of his acquaintance (*Vita Waltharii*, BR 01780-01781 f. 76v. Jennifer Carpenter used codicological connections to justify studying the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* as a group (Jennifer Carpenter, "A New Heaven and a New Earth: The *Vitae* of the *Mulieres Religiosae* of Liège" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Toronto, 1997), pp. xxvii-xxxii).

9. Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, p. 31.

10. VCV c. 3, par. 18, p. 976; DM bk. 8, par. 63, p. 165. Cf. Martinus Cawley, "Four Abbots of the Golden Age of Villers" *CSQ* 27 (1992): 302-03; Moreau, *L'abbaye*, pp. 40-42; Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 30-31.

Charles was a respected soldier and his hagiographer portrayed his military experience as integral to his vocation. However, Charles' secular influence extended beyond what would be expected of a soldier. In what may be a deliberate allusion to the *life* of Bernard of Clairvaux, shortly after he left the world many of Charles' powerful contemporaries and former colleagues followed his example and made profession in the Cistercian Order.[11] Charles entered the house of Himmerode, where he planned to live as a contemplative. However, he was not permitted to remain. Instead, he was elected first as prior of Heisterbach and then as abbot of Villers.

As is common in *vitae,* Charles was reluctant to accept positions of authority. However, the Lord made it clear to both Charles and the community that this was his will.[12] Charles committed himself to Villers and dedicated his life to improving both the abbey grounds and the devotional life of the community.[13] In another Bernardine parallel, Charles' hagiographer tells us that he was able to revitalise a tiny and somewhat insignificant community.[14] At the end of his abbacy, Villers was establishing itself as an economic and spiritual leader in the southern Low Countries.[15] Despite Charles' tremendous success as abbot, he never forgot his call to the contemplative life. After completing the work he had been called to Villers to accomplish, Charles finally allowed himself to retire to his beloved Himmerode.

In addition to meriting a *vita,* the role that he plays in many other texts from the Low Countries testifies to Charles' prominence. Because he was an abbot, it is no surprise that

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11. Charles' companions included Fredericus and Philip the archbishop of Cologne (VCV c. 1, par. 1, p. 976). For Charles' entry to the religious life see, VCV c. 1, par. 3, p. 977. Cf. VPB bk. 1, c. 3, par. 15-16.

12. VCV c. 1, par. 4, p. 977. Cf. *Monasticon Belge* t. 4, vol. 2, pp. 369-70.

13. VCV c. 3, par. 12, p. 978; CV pp. 197, 223-26. Cf. Moreau, *L'abbaye*, pp. xxiv-xxv, 47-50, 138; Cawley, "Four Abbots," pp. 305-06.

14. VPB bk. 1, c. 3; cf. Bredero, *Bernard of Clairvaux*, pp. 201-04.

15. Moreau, *L'abbaye*, pp. 43-48.

Charles is mentioned repeatedly in the archives of Villers. In addition, he is named in the *vitae* of Abundus of Huy and Godefridus the Sacristan.[16] A *vitula* of Charles is included in the *Chronica villariensis* and in Caesarius' *Dialogus miraculorum.*

Walter of Birbech: Walter of Birbech (+ c. 1222) lived in the diocese of Liège during the late twelfth and the early thirteenth centuries. Although few precise details of his life are known, it is evident that Walter's background was noble. He associated with men such as the above-mentioned Charles, Ulricus Flascus, and Gerardus Wascardus.[17] Moreover, Walter was lettered in Latin and had some military training. As is shown later in this thesis, his hagiographer incorporated Walter's military training into the ways in which he portrayed Walter's sanctity.[18] After leaving the secular world at the behest of his adored *domina* the Blessed Virgin, Walter became a monk at Himmerode. He remained closely associated with Villers both as a result of his acquaintance with the abbot Charles and various men associated with the house.[19] He was eventually elected abbot of Birbech.

There are four extant copies of the *life* of Walter, two of which are included in codices with other members of the Villers corpus. The fifteenth-century Brussels codex BR 01780-01781 contains both a prose and a verse *vita.*[20] The *life* of Charles of Villers mentions Walter as Charles' close companion and Caesarius of Heisterbach includes a short *life* of Walter in his *Dialogus miraculorum.* Although Walter was not a member of the Villers community, he appears to have been both closely linked with the house and influential in Cistercian circles throughout the southern Low Countries. His *vita* reflects de-

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16. VAB c. 4-5; VAR bk. 1, c.1 par. 7, p. 610; ibid bk. 1, c. 3, par. 21, pp. 612-13; VGS c. 2, par. 8, p. 534. Cf. Cawley, "Four Abbots," pp. 302-06.

17. VCV c. 1, par. 4, p. 977. Cf. CV p. 221, nn. 1-2.

18. VWB c. 1, par. 1, p. 447.

19. VCV c. 1, par. 4, p. 977; *Vita Waltharii,* BR 1780-1781, f. 76v. Cf. Moreau, *L'abbaye*, p. xxxv.

20. BR 01780-01781, ff. 71r-78r; BR 01780-01781 78r-80v; BR 4459-4470 ff. 63r-63v; Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Ser. N. 12710 ff. 194 r-197v (Falmagne, *Un texte en contexte*).

votional themes similar to those of the Villers corpus. He is also connected to Villers by codicology, temporal and geographical proximity.

Vitae Monachorum

Godefridus the Sacristan: The anonymous hagiographer of Godefridus the Sacristan (+c.1198) did not allow himself to be distracted from his primary task of presenting Godefridus' spirituality by conveying biographical details. The *vita Godefridi* contains no description of his time in the secular world. Instead, at the beginning of this text, Godefridus is introduced as a Benedictine monk living in the community of Saint Pantaleon in the diocese of Cologne. Though he was a valued member of the community, he was unsatisfied with his spiritual growth among the "black monks." He was increasingly distressed about the laxity with which the *Rule of Saint Benedict* was enforced and was distressed by offences such as women sleeping in the cloister or communal eating of meat on fast days.[21] Called to lead a more arduous life in the Lord's service, Godefridus developed a yearning to "pass over" to the Cistercian Order and shortly afterwards professed in Villers.[22]

The *vita Godefridi* tells us that Godefridus was welcomed joyfully into the Villers community, where he immediately began to fulfil the functions of sacristan.[23] Among the Cistercians, Godefridus felt free to pursue his earlier desire for a more ascetic way of life. He began to castigate his flesh and gave generously to the community which surrounded the monastery.[24] As is detailed in Chapter Three of this thesis, Godefridus was devoted to Christ and his Mother and assiduously observed his duties towards them. He was re-

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21. VGS c. 1, par. 1, p. 534.

22. VGS c. 1, par. 1, p. 534. The word for Godefridus' moving to Villers is *transeo –ire*, which also has the connotation of being transformed. See, *Lewis and Short*, s. v. transeo p. 1889, col. A.

23. VGS c. 1, par. 2, p. 534; cf. ibid, c. 2, par. 8, p. 535.

24. VGS c. 1, par. 2, p. 534; VGS c. 1, par. 3-7, p. 534; ibid, c. 2, par. 10, p. 535.

warded for his good works with divine visions, which reassured him that his acts were pleasing to God.[25]

Werricus of Aulne: The anonymous *life* of Werricus (+1217) was written around 1229. It contains little explicit biographical information, but conveys a picture of a devout man with influential social origins. The *vita* conveys that Werricus was literate, he loved poetry, was ordained and diligent in writing sermons. Werricus was able to ride, and had some military background.[26] Werricus had followed Bernard to Clairvaux in 1147. In that same year, he was chosen with eleven other men to found a Cistercian community at Aulne.[27] At Aulne, Werricus was given the role of *magister conversorum*, and he was exceedingly attentive in caring for the spiritual and sacramental needs of the brothers in his care.[28] His reputation for holiness spread because of his charity and visionary experiences, which, together with his physical asceticism, are emphasised in his *vita.*

The *vita Werrici* is anonymous, but almost certainly written by a brother from Aulne.[29] It is composed entirely in verse, indicating that it may have been read aloud, either recreationally or liturgically.[30] Verse *vitae* were common in later medieval Europe, particularly for public recitation. One manuscript of Werricus' *vita* is included in a codex from Aulne which is now in Brussels. This codex includes a number of verse texts, including the book of Job and the *Lamentations* of Jerome.[31] The texts which comprise this codex are written

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25. VGS c. 2, par. 9, p. 535.

26. VWA pp. 448, 451-52, 456.

27. Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 46-47; *Menologium Cisterciense*, pp. 272-73.

28. VWA p. 449.

29. Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, p. 46.

30. Aigrain, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 165-66; Lifshitz, "Beyond Positivism and Genre," p. 100. Cf. Gunilla Björkvall and Andreas Haug, "Performing Latin Verse: Text and Music in Early Medieval Versified Offices," in *The Divine Office in the Latin Middle Ages*, ed. Margot E. Fassler and Rebecca A. Baltzer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 278-99.

31. BR II 1047 ff. 72r-81v. This manuscript is parchment, 176 folios, 0, 225 x 0, 132mm. It originates from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and is bound in white leather. Cf. Gheyn, *Catalogue des manuscrits*, cat. 3298, pp. 282-83.

in a large and legible hand with very few abbreviations, which suggests they were regularly read aloud. A second extant manuscript of this *vita,* also currently in Brussels, was requested for the Villers library in 1320.[32]

Abundus of Huy: Abundus (+1239) was born to a respectable and devout family in Huy. His father, also Abundus, was skilled in worldly affairs and hoped that his son and namesake would follow his example.[33] His mother, Maria, was pious and concerned that her children should be educated in the fear of the Lord. The *vita* does not provide details of her efforts to encourage the devotion of Abundus' siblings; however, it tells us that she taught Abundus to pray, sent him to be schooled by Augustinian canons, and sewed him an alb so that he might regularly attend Mass and the Divine Office according to the school's custom.[34] As Abundus' siblings also opted for the religious life, one can assume that Maria took similar pains with her other children and her efforts were eventually rewarded. Abundus and his two brothers became Cistercian monks; two of his three sisters became Cistercian nuns; and the third lived as a consecrated laywoman in her parents' home before entering the Cistercian house of La Ramée.[35]

During his childhood and early adolescence, Abundus began to consider the religious life: he began to pray before a crucifix, to meditate daily on the passion of Christ and to engage in such asceticism as his youthful body would allow.[36] As Abundus progressed in holiness, he consulted with a local recluse, probably Juette of Huy. At the age of sixteen

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32. BR 4459-4470 159r-166v. Thomas Falmagne, "Jean de saint-Trond" in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastique,* volume 27, ed. Roger Aubert et al. (Paris and Louvain, 1912-).

33. VAB c. 1-2 pp. 13-14. Cf. Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, pp. 5-7; *Monasticon Belge* t. 4, v. 2, p. 372.

34. VAB c. 1-2, pp. 13-14. Cf. *Gallia Christiana* bk. 5, cc. 36-41.

35. VAB c. 12, p. 19. Cf. *Gallia Christiana* bk. 3, cc. 604-605, 1121-1124. The *vita Abundi* makes no mention of Abundus having siblings who do not enter the religious life, but later the *vita* speaks of Iohannes, the son of Abundus' sister, suggesting that the account of Abundus' family is simply conforming to the *topos* of familial piety. "...non alium esse *nisi filium sororis sue*... Johannem nomine..." (VAB c. 16. Italics mine). Cf. Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society,* pp. 194-219; Vauchez, *Sainthood*, pp. 507-09.

36. VAB c. 3, p. 14. Cf. Moreau, *L'abbaye*, pp. 98-99.

he resolved to dedicate himself to the Lord according to the Cistercian custom, in the house of Villers.[37] Despite Abundus' parents alleged interest in his future, his hagiographer makes no comment about their reaction to his decision.

Once he had entered Villers, the *vita Abundi* ceases to discuss Abundus' asceticism and focuses instead on his spiritual growth. Shortly after entering the house, Abundus endured a period of extreme *acedia* during which he endured all manner of demonic assault.[38] Despite hardship, Abundus persevered in his vocation and eventually earned a reputation for holiness. In particular, Abundus was known for his extreme veneration of the Virgin who often revealed the state of the hearts of others to him. In this way, Abundus was able to carry out his ministry of counselling and leading sinful or confused souls to the path of righteousness.[39]

The author of the *vita Abundi* is uncertain, yet Roisin makes an excellent case that it is Goswin of Bossut.[40] There are two existing manuscripts of the *vita Abundi*, but the final folia for the oldest copy (BR 19525) are missing. The second dates from the fifteenth century and its final folia are identical with the ending of the *vita Arnulfi*.[41] Abundus is also named in the *Chronica villariensis* and the *life* of Gobertus of Aspermont.

Godefridus Pachomius: Godefridus Pachomius (+1262) was born in Louvain to a family of middling social standing.[42] His father, Thomas, was a *vestarius*;[43] his mother,

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37. VAB c. 4, p. 15.

38. VAB c. 5-6, pp. 15-18.

39. VAB c. 8-14, 16-20. Cf. CV c. 9, p. 232; Ellington, *Sacred Body*, pp. 110-21 and 128-41.

40. Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 35-38; cf. *Monasticon Belge* t. 4, v. 2, pp. 342-43.

41. BR 19525, tot; ÖNB 12854 (Falmagne, *Un text en contexte*, pp. 102-06; Martinus Cawley, "Select Bibliography," in *Send me God*, p. xxii). For the association with the *vita Arnulfi* see, N. Huyghebaert, "Arnoud ou Abond? À propos d'une épitaphe de Villers-en-Brabant" *Cîteaux* 33 (1982): 392-96; Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, p. 35; Cawley, "Appendix II" in *Send me God*, pp. 249-50.

42. VGP c. 1, p. 264.

43. Thomas' employer, Henricus of Brabant was noted for his generosity to Villers, there are at least two documents in the archives detailing plots of land that he donated to the monastery (Brussel/Bruxelles, Archives écclesiastiques, 10965, f. 2; 10966, f. 65r).

Aleidis, was a pious woman, devoted to the Virgin, and concerned that her children receive proper instruction in the religious life.[44] Aleidis' efforts in this regard were rewarded: all four of her children, and later her husband, eventually entered the Cistercian Order.[45] After describing their entry into the religious life, Godefridus' hagiographer ceased to discuss his family and concentrated instead on Godefridus' personal spiritual development.

Godefridus, and his brother Thomas, entered Villers on the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin (8 September), 1216.[46] The ambivalence or even antipathy towards secular family that is sometimes thought typical of later medieval sanctity is entirely absent from Godefridus' *vita*.[47] Instead, Godefridus' family remained close: his father entered Villers to be near his son and Thomas kept in touch with his sister in the Cistercian house of *Parcum dominarum*. There is still an existing correspondence between Thomas and his sister; however, the letters seem more concerned with devotional growth than personal details.[48] Godefridus' *vita* emphasises his charity, devotion to the Blessed Virgin and his intense visionary spirituality.[49]

The anonymous *vita Godefridi* was written shortly after his death in 1262. One fifteenth-century manuscript of the *vita* remains. It is bound in a codex which also contains a copy of the *vita Abundi* and the *life* of Petrus.[50] In addition, Godefridus is mentioned in the *Chronica villariensis* and in the archives of Villers.

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44. VGP c. 1-3, 5, pp. 264-65. Cf. Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 43-44.

45. VGP c. 1, p. 264. Cf. Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, p. 44.

46. VGP c. 3, p. 264. Cf. Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, p. 44.

47. For a discussion of this *topos* see, Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, p. 82.

48. E. Mikkers, "Deux lettres inédite de Thomas, chantre de Villers," *Collectanea Ordinis Cisterciencium* 10 (1948): 161-73.

49. VGP c. 5-7, pp. 264-65. Cf. Moreau, *L'abbaye*, p. 88.

50. ÖNB ser. N. 12854 ff. 45r-64r. Cf. Moreau, *L'abbaye*, p. xxxiv.

Gobertus of Aspermont: Gobertus (+1263) was born to a noble family of the house of Aspermont. Despite being a younger son, his extraordinary strength and skill caused his father, Count Geoffrey, to name him as heir to his title.[51] Archival evidence suggests that around the year 1211, Gobertus married a woman named Juliana and subsequently sired eight children. Significantly, this fact is absent from his *vita*.[52] In the year 1228, like many of his contemporaries, Gobertus "took the cross." Under the leadership of Frederick II, he left Flanders to protect the Holy Land. Although they reclaimed Jerusalem in 1229, the crusaders met with much hardship.[53] His anonymous hagiographer tells us that while Gobertus earned great renown for his military skill and chivalrous demeanour on his armed pilgrimage, he began to feel an absence in his life.[54] Rather than immediately renouncing the secular world, Gobertus began to incorporate acts of charity into his daily life: he gave his worldly possessions to the poor, protected widows and orphans, and began to show a great reverence for Church officials.[55] Gobertus' desire for a new life remained with him when he returned to Flanders. Seeking guidance, Gobertus approached the beguine Emmeloth, who counselled him to seek the advice of Abundus in the house

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51. Jean-Baptiste Lefèvre, "Gobert, seigneur d'Aspremont et moine de Villers (v. 1187-1263)," *Villers* 8 (1998): 5-6; Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 38-40.

52. Lefèvre, "Gobert, Seigneur d'Aspremont," p. 6. nn. 9-11. It is surprising that there is no mention of Gobertus' wife in the *vita*. Lefèvre argues that Gobertus' hagiographer alludes to his marriage by referring to the gospel passage, "if any man come to me without hating his mother, father, children, *wife*, and possessions, he cannot be my disciple..." (Luke 14:26). However, a similar reference occurs in the *life* of the unmarried Godefridus Pachomius.

53. M. Michaud, *Histoire des Croisades* (Paris: Furne et Cie, 1854), bk. 3, pp. 1-50, esp. pp. 20-21; Cf. James M. Powell, *Anatomy of a Crusade, 1213-1221* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), pp. 195-204.

54. VGA bk. 1, c. 1, par. 13.

55. VGA bk. 1, c. 2, par. 22-23, p. 381.

of Villers of which he was a patron.[56] After speaking with Abundus, Gobertus sold his remaining belongings and entered the novitiate.

Gobertus' religious calling had been motivated, in part, by an increasing personal devotion to the Blessed Virgin.[57] Gobertus never received the sacrament of ordination which, in his hagiographers view, was because he never learned to read Latin.[58] In addition to his Marian piety, Gobertus was praised for his extreme charity, which is often considered typical of holy women.[59]

Gobertus died in 1263, and was buried at Villers.[60] One of his confreres recorded his *vita* shortly afterwards. The *vita* exists in three manuscript copies. Instead of a short *vitula,* the entire text of his *life* is included in at least one manuscript of the *Chronica villariensis.*[61]

Vitae Conversorum

The vocations of "abbot" and "choir monk" are familiar to any scholar of monasticism and neither changed significantly in the "new" orders that developed in the high Middle Ages. It is, however, important to examine the third vocation found in the Villers corpus, that of *conversus.* Traditional scholarship agrees upon an image of the stereotype of the Cistercian lay brother: he was a "serf" or "slave" to the order; he is thought to have joined

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56. VGA bk. 2, c. 1, par. 38. Evidence of Gobertus' patronage is preserved in the Archives of Villers. (Brussel/Bruxelles, Archives écclesiastique du Brabant, 10967, f. 30r). Cf. *Monasticon Belge* t. 4, vol. 2, pp. 342, 348, 393, 408.

57. VGA bk. 1, c. 3, par. 27. For a discussion of the Hours of the Virgin see, Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, p. 114, n. 5. Cf. Dominic Selwood, *Knights of the Cloister: Templars and Hospitallers in Central Southern Occitania c. 1100-c.1300* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1999), pp. 203-04.

58. Cf. William Pantin, "Instructions for a devout and Literate Layman," in *Medieval Literature and Learning*, ed. J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 402-03.

59. JoAnn McNamara discusses charity as "feminine" see, McNamara, "The Need to Give," pp. 199-221.

60. Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, p. 40. Cf. *Monasticon Belge* t. 4, vol. 2, p. 348.

61. ÖNB scr. N. 12854 ff. 161-162v; Pamplona, Archivo General de Navarra, Ms. Var. II; Pamplona, Archivo General de Navarra, Ms. Var. XI (Falmagne, *Un texte en contexte*, p. 126); BR 7776-7781 ff. 118r-126.

for reasons of economic necessity rather than spiritual motivations;[62] he is thought to have been uneducated.[63] Four of the *vitae* examined in this thesis are *vitae* of lay brothers. As hagiography presents models of ideal religious behaviour for imitation or admiration, it is unlikely that men who had no interest in the religious life and who were merely fulfilling a servile function as a result of economic necessity would merit hagiographic portrayals. A close examination of Cistercian sources reveals a very different picture of the *conversi*. The Cistercian lay brotherhood was a diverse body, comprised of men with a range of skills including medical and mercantile activity.[64]

Scholars have often focussed on the economic benefit of the *conversi* to the Cistercian Order, a preoccupation that is not entirely without justification. Cistercian grange farming, for which the *conversi* were almost entirely responsible, made the Order one of the largest landholders in Western Europe during the high Middle Ages. Many of the *conversi* came from families of lower social standing and they were often uneducated. As the *Exordium parvum* makes clear manual labour was a concern to the early Cistercian legislators:

> It was then that they enacted a definition to receive, with their bishop's permission, bearded lay brothers, and to treat them as themselves in life and death

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62. Duby, *Three Orders*, pp. 222-25; David Knowles, *Christian Monasticism* (World University library, 1969), pp. 74, 84-89; idem, *The Monastic Order in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 634; Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, p. 180; Lekai, *The Cistercians*, pp. 336-39.

63. Ducourneau, "De l'institution et de Us des Convers," pp. 150-51. It is important to keep in mind that the Cistercian Order did not accept oblates, and the minimum age of entry was sixteen; in 1157, it was raised to nineteen. It would be reasonable to expect that Cistercian novices would have received a large part of their education before entering the monastery (Bredero, *Bernard of Clairvaux*, p. 10; Newman, *Boundaries of Charity*, p. 24).

64. Although the lay brotherhood undoubtedly included many peasants, noble lay brothers were not unknown. One of the earliest lay brothers was Bernard of Clairvaux's uncle Milo of Montbard, who was almost certainly noble (PL t. 185, c. 1461). Noble *conversi* seem to have been common enough to be considered problematic by 1188, as in that year the Chapter General forbade nobles from joining the lay brotherhood (*Statuta* 1188 c. 8, p. 108; cf. *Twelfth-century Statutes*, 1188, c. 10, p. 151). Constance Berman, Conrad Greenia and Duane Osheim have found evidence of all classes being represented among the lay brothers well into the thirteenth century (Constance H. Berman, *Medieval Agriculture, the Southern French Countryside, and the Early Cistercians. A Study of Forty-three Monasteries* (Philadelphia: Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 1986), pp. 55-60; Conrad Greenia, "The Laybrother Vocation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *CSQ* 16 (1981): 44-45; Duane Osheim, "Conversion, *Conversi* and the Religious Life," *Speculum* 58 (1983): 378).

> except that they may not become monks ... for without the assistance of these they did not understand how they could fully observe the precepts of the Rule day and night.[65]

This passage is often cited as "proof" for the servile status of the *conversi*. While it shows that some, perhaps most, lay brothers were involved in manual labour, the passage carries no implications of lower status. When considering the *Exordium parvum*, it is important to keep in mind that the *conversi* did not immediately take over all labour in the monastic community. Instead, they were only responsible for manual tasks that would interfere with the strict observance of one of the principals of monastic life, the Divine Office.[66] As the Cistercian Order was founded by men who wished to return to a stricter observance of the Benedictine rule, it is unlikely that they would have sought to be excused from an ideal that was as central to its spirit as manual labour.[67] Furthermore, it would have been almost impossible for the *conversi* to fulfil the amount of manual labour required by Cistercian communities without the assistance of the monks.[68]

In addition to their servile function, the illiteracy of the *conversi* has become accepted in modern scholarship.[69] However, close examination of Cistercian sources shows that the assumed universal illiteracy of the lay brothers is somewhat problematic. The Cistercian Order did not provide its lay brothers with even a rudimentary Latin education, but the

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65. "Exordium Parvum," c. 15, trans. Bede K. Lackner in *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* by Louis J. Lekai (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1977), p. 459.

66. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, pp. 32-3; Armand Veilleux, "Apologia de Barbis: Understanding of the Laybrothers' Vocation in the Cistercian Order." <www.users.skynet.be/bs775533/Armand/wri/brothers.htm> May 2001.

67. "Otiositas inimica est animae, et ideo certis temporibus occupari debent fratres in labore manuum, certis iterum horis in lectione diuina..." (RSB c. 48). Cf. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, pp. 177-78.

68. *Statuta* 1154 c. 4, p. 57; Colin Platt, *The Monastic Grange in Medieval England* (London: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 76-77.

69. Brockhaus, *Religious who are Known as Conversi*, pp. 23-24; Dubois, "L'institution," pp. 215-17; Duby, *Three Orders*, p. 224; Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, p. 180-81; Leclercq, "Comment vivaient," pp. 156-7; Southern, *Western Society*, p. 257; Newman, "Crucified by the Virtues," pp. 182-209; Ducourneau, "De l'institution," pp. 147-49.

Chapter General did not, and could not, prevent literate men from joining the lay brotherhood. The statutes often forbid *conversi* to read publicly, or to own non-religious books.[70] These precautions would have been unnecessary if dealing with an illiterate group of men. It is almost certain that a very high percentage of the lay brotherhood consisted of manual labourers; however, it was far from unheard of for a skilled or educated man to become a lay brother and hold a position of considerable responsibility or prestige in the Cistercian Order.

It is generally thought that any literate man who approached the Cistercian Order would become an ordained choir monk. Ideally, knowledge of Latin was essential for presiding at Mass, and it appears that the Villers hagiographers attached some importance to this standard.[71] However, not all choir-monks received the sacrament of orders, and literacy was not a requirement for the simple religious life. The *Ecclesiasticorum officiorum* gives a detailed outline of the proper procedures that illiterate monks and novices must follow in choir.[72] Hagiography, including the *vita Goberti*, presents monks who had never received an education in Latin letters. In addition to illiterate monks, literate lay brothers, though not always encouraged, were not unknown. Caesarius speaks of a literate *conversus* whose pride in his erudition led to his undoing;[73] Herbert of Clairvaux recounts the tale of a lay brother who had been taught to read in a dream.[74]

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70. Statuta 1157 c. 7, p. 60; UC c. 9. Cf. Dubois, "L'institution," p. 217.

71. Because of his illiteracy, Gobertus was unable to participate fully in the divine office, and contented himself with the solace he could receive from the sound of the Little Office of the Virgin (VGA bk. 2, c. 3, pp. 61-62).

72. "Si conversus est *vel monachus* qui non intelligat litteras idem illi romane exponat sacerdos" (EO 93, c. 33, p. 268). Italics mine. Cf. EO 71, c. 6, p. 212; *Statuta* 1134 c. 78, p. 31; Dubois, "L'institution," pp. 215-17. Dubois cites the example of Christian de l'Aumône, an unlettered Cistercian monk (J. LeClercq, "Le texte complete de la vie de Chretian de l'Aumône," *AB* 71 (1953): 21-52). For illiterate novices see, EO 102, c. 24, p. 296; EO 113, c. 11, p. 318.

73. DM t. 1, bk. 5, c. 16, pp. 336-37.

74. Herbert, *De Miraculis*, bk. 1, c. 31, c. 1304.

Considering the somewhat disparaging portrayal of *conversi* in many monastic sources, it is perhaps not surprising that modern scholars should see it as a "vocation" of necessity. However, the lay brotherhood included nobles and educated men well into the thirteenth century, which seems to suggest that there was a reason for choosing life as a *conversus*.[75] As they were responsible for temporal administration as well as buying and selling, the *conversi* enjoyed regular contact with the secular community. Such contact was officially forbidden to choir monks. The lay brothers lived monastic lives comprised of work and prayer; but unlike the choir monks, they spent a significant amount of time labouring. It is easy to imagine a merchant or other administrator being called to incorporate prayer into his life, but not to leave his work or make prayer the entire focus of his existence. The option of the living as a *conversus*, much like the semi-religious vocations of the same period, would have allowed men to incorporate monastic devotion into their lives without entirely giving up worldly activity.[76]

Placing the *vitae* of the Villers *conversi* in a spiritual context has been difficult. There has been very little scholarly attention focussed on the spirituality of the *conversi*. In the most comprehensive study to date, Kassius Hallinger points out that it is necessary for the

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75. There is evidence to suggest that the lay brotherhood included members who were skilled as doctors (*Statuta* 1157 c. 46, p. 65) and merchants (*Statuta* 1134 cc. 51-52, pp. 24-25; *Statuta* 1157 c. 35, p. 64). Cf. Donnelly, *Decline*, p. 19.

76. Both the *Usus conversorum* and the *Regula conversorum* outline the ways in which the Cistercian *conversi* were to adapt the observance of the Divine Office to accommodate their work. Rather than undermining the religious significance of the *conversi*, the care that Cistercian legislators devoted to accommodating their religious lives emphasises this as an important part of the lay brothers' vocation. It is important to keep in mind that concessions made to allow for work do not immediately render a vocation "less important" or "invalid." The Knights Templar, a military order, that Bernard of Clairvaux played a significant role in founding, were permitted to have extra sleep and food if their duties had been particularly strenuous (Malcolm Barber, *The New Knighthood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 17. For the role of St. Bernard see, ibid, pp. 10-18, 44-50 and 99; cf. Alan Forey, *The Military Orders* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p. 17). Although there was much contemporary criticism of the Knights as a monastic order, much of this criticism focused on their lack of stability rather than the concessions allowed to them because of their physical needs (James Brundage, "A Transformed Angel (X 3. 31. 18): The Problem of the Crusading Monk," *Studies in Medieval Cistercian Thought* (Spencer: Cistercian Publications, 1971), pp. 55-62).

sources that portray the *conversi* to be put in order before it would be possible to understand these men.[77] Hallinger made this observation in 1956 and despite some subsequent study of the *conversi* in their monastic context, the task of ordering Cistercian sources has only been recently undertaken.[78] The very term "lay brother" is somewhat mysterious. The Cistercian usages, the statutes of the Chapter General and the *vitae* refer to these men as *conversi* rather than as *fratres laici*. Although men who chose to become *conversi* in most cases could never be ordained, they were not full members of the laity. Instead, *conversi* took an oath to their abbot, which bound them to vows of poverty, chastity and obedience until death.[79]

Arnulfus of Villers: Arnulfus of Villers, or Arnulfus Cornibout, was born to a Brabantine family of indeterminate but unremarkable social status at the end of the twelfth century.[80] As a young man, Arnulfus was seduced by the empty pleasures of the secular world.[81] After a brief and youthful sojourn amidst carnal delights, God's grace brought Arnulfus back to the path of the just.[82] In 1202, Arnulfus resolved to dedicate himself to the Lord according to the Cistercian custom and entered Villers as a *conversus*. Instead of the main abbey, Arnulfus lived on the grange of Mellemont, where he was responsible for delivering grain to both the abbey of Villers and the surrounding secular community until his death in 1228.[83]

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77. Hallinger "Woher kommen die Laienbruder?," pp. 1-104.

78. Chrysogonus Waddell, introduction to *Cistercian Lay Brothers: Twelfth-century usages with related texts* (Citeaux: Brecht, 2000), pp. 10-25.

79. UC c. 13, p. 71.

80. For all the Villers *conversi* except Simon of Aulne see, *Monasticon Belge* t. 4, v. 2, p. 355, 355 n. 1.

81. By the high Middle Ages, this was a frequent *topos* in the *vitae* of male saints (Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, pp. 105-13).

82. VAR bk. 1, c. 1, par. 4-5, p. 609.

83. Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 32-34; Moreau, *L'abbaye*, pp. xxvii-xxix.

Saints are necessarily extraordinary, but Arnulfus was unusual even by saintly standards. The first book of the *vita Arnulfi* reads as a litany of horrors. In the second book of the *vita*, Goswin portrays Arnulfus as a friend of God by recounting his miraculous abilities and visionary experiences. Arnulfus, the "new martyr," has exchanged his austerities for a tremendous joy and love of neighbour. Instead of further tales of torment, Goswin now recounts tales that illustrate Arnulfus' charity and pastoral concern.

The historical Arnulfus was not an influential figure in thirteenth-century theological circles: if he wrote a tractate, sermon or reflection, any mention of it is now lost; he neither preached a crusade nor founded an order. Our picture of Arnulfus comes primarily from the *vita Arnulfi*, an account of Arnulfus' life and religious behaviour, written shortly after his death. This text currently exists in at least six manuscripts.[84] The manuscripts are of varied origin. For the most part, they originate from the southern Low Countries and one was copied in Northern Europe. One of the manuscripts of the *vita*, was probably written at Villers and was in the Villers library in 1309. This indicates that Arnulfus' sanctity was recognised both in his own house and throughout the region.[85] The *vita Arnulfi*, and a later Office for the feast of Arnulfus were written by Goswin of Bossut, the cantor

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84. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud. Misc. 222 ff. 1v-18; Bruxelles, Bibliothèque des Bollandistes, 98, ff 5-21. According to Falmagne, Ms. Var. Pamplona Archivo General de Navarra II ff. 45-110 (Falmagne, Conversation with author, 08 2003); Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale, 1434; ÖNB 12831/4909 (Falmagne, *Un texte en contexte*, p. 48, n. 95). Martinus Cawley cites five manuscripts see, Cawley, "Select Bibliography," in *Send me God*, pp. xx-xxii.

85. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz, theol. lat. 4, n. 195 (Gerard Achten, *Die Theologischen Lateinischen Handshriften in Quarto der Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin* (Berlin: Otto Harrassowitz, 1979), pp. 128-29; Falmagne, *Un texte en contexte*, pp. 42-42); Bruxelles, Bibliothèque des Bollandistes, 98; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud. misc. 222 ff 1v-18r; Pamplona, Archivo General de Navarra, Ms. Var. II (Falmagne, *Un texte en contexte*, pp. 43-44; online catalogue of the Hill Monastic Library, www. hmml.org/manusearch/manudetail.asp?MSID=6175, accessed on 03 September, 2002); Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale, 1434(*Catalogue Général des Manuscrites des Bibliothèques Publiques des Départements*, publié sous les auspices du ministre de l'instruction publique (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1855), p. 600.); ÖNB 12831 (*Catalogus Codicus Hagiographicorum*, pp 237-38; Falmagne, *Un texte en contexte*, pp. 520-22). Arnulfus is not referred to in Thomas de Cantimpré's *Bonum universale de apibus*.

of Villers.[86] Arnulfus' austerities are also described in the *Chronica villariensis*, and he is mentioned as a witness to a land transfer in the archives of Villers.

Simon of Aulne: About the year 1190, a young man named Simon visited the Cistercian house of Aulne. Here he was greatly impressed, both by the lifestyle of the brothers and by the peace that seemed innate to the monastic life.[87] Simon's social origins are somewhat unclear: Caesarius tells us that he arrived as a shepherd, while his *vita*, perhaps simply in keeping with a traditional hagiographic *topos*, ascribes him with a rather ambiguous noble origin.[88] Whatever his past, in 1180 Simon made his initial profession as a *conversus* in the house of Aulne. At that time he assumed responsibility for the sheep and developed rigorous ascetic practices, which were intended to purify him, particularly from the sin of lust.[89] As he grew in faith, Simon gained an international reputation for holiness. His visionary experiences caught the attention of Innocent III. According to his *vita*, Simon was present in an advisory role at the fourth Lateran Council. Against Cistercian tradition he was offered the sacrament of orders.[90] Simon died in 1229.

Throughout this thesis, the manuscript of the *vita Simonis* that is most commonly cited dates from the nineteenth-century.[91] A printed edition, compiled by Franciscus Moschus in the seventeenth century differs from the manuscript to such an extent that it suggests at least two separate manuscript traditions.[92] A seventeenth-century French translation ap-

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86. BR II 1658. Cf. Misonne, "Office Liturgique," pp. 270-78.

87. VSA par. 1, f. 209 r. Cf. Nimal, *Villers et Aulne*, pp. 212-16.

88. DM vol. 1, bk. 3, c. 33, p. 150; VSA par. 1, f. 209r; cf. Moschus, *Vita Simonis*, p. 127.

89. For the duties of Cistercian *conversi* who were responsible for the flocks see, UC c. 6, pp. 64-66; UC c. 16, pp. 73-74; RC c. 11. For Simon's asceticism see, VSA par. 3, 6, ff. 210-211v. Cf. Nimal, *Villers et Aulne*, pp. 214-15.

90. VSA par. 27, f. 217v. Cf. Nimal, *Villers et Aulne*, pp. 233-34; Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 47-48.

91. BR 8965-8966 ff. 208r-224r. This manuscript is paper. The codex consists of 373 pages, and measures 0,327m X 0, 214m, although the *vita Simonis* is approximately .015 m x .020m Cf. Gheyn, *Catalogue des manuscrites*, t. 5, cat. 3517, pp. 600-04.

92. *Beatorum Arnulphi Villariensis et Simonis Alnensis*, ed. Franciscus Moschus (Atrebati: Ex Officina Guilielmi Riverii, 1600). Cf. Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 48-49.

pears to be taken from the same manuscript as the Moschus edition.[93] Simon of Aulne is linked with the Villers corpus in that he is referred to in contemporary texts as being connected with Liègeois Cistercian houses. More significantly, his *vita* reflects similar devotional themes to those which are prevalent in the Villers corpus.

Petrus of Villers: The *vita Petri* was written in the first half of the thirteenth century by Henricus, then master of the *conversi*.[94] Like the *vita Arnulfi*, the *life* of Petrus is a veritable catalogue of ascetic acts. While it reveals something of the devotional climate of the period, it tells us almost nothing about Petrus himself. Petrus' existence is also supported by a 1225 charter from the grange of Mellemont which names him as a witness in a land-transfer and a brief mention in a *kalandarium* of the holy men of Villers.[95] The *life* of Petrus currently exists in two manuscript copies, one of which is bound in the same codex as a copy of the *life* of Godefridus Pachomius.[96] Petrus is also mentioned in the Villers archives and described in the *Chronica villariensis*. Manuscripts and editions of the *Chronica* often contain various versions of the *vita Petri*. Some of these are simply *vitulae* and some are the entire text of the *life*.[97]

Nicholaos of Villers: The historical Nicholaos of Villers is a rather elusive character. His existence is testified to only by a short *vita*, and a land transfer deed in the Villers archives. His anonymous thirteenth-century *life* tells us that he was a shepherd on one of Villers' many grange farms.[98] During his time at Villers, Nicholaos' duties as a shepherd and distance from the monastery gave him a certain freedom: he was able to circumvent

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93. *Vie du Bienhereux Simon convers à l'abbaye d'Aulne*, tr. B. de Dorlodot (Tournai: n. p., 1968).

94. Cf. Falmagne, *Un texte en contexte*, p. 44.

95. Brussel/Bruxelles, Archives écclesiastiques du Brabant, 11210, 167r; BR 7776-77781, ff. 86r-90v. Cf. Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, p, 45, nn. 1, 4.

96. ÖNB 7928 ff. 93-113; Bruges, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 425, f. 98.

97. BR 7776-7781 ff. 86r-90v; London British Library MS. Add. 25053, ff. 89r-92r; Bruges, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 425, f. 98.

98. VNC c. 1, par. 5, p. 279. Cf. Moreau, *L'abbaye*, p. 178.

the regulations on meals and to engage in covert but extreme asceticism, which eventually resulted in his skin becoming black.[99] Nicholaos' hagiographer neither states nor implies anything about his social background, saying only that he was a man of diminutive stature.

The available archival information consists of a man named Nicholaos being named as a witness to a land donation charter from the monastery.[100] Needless to say, this does little to supplement the sketchy biographical information rendered by his *vita*.

The Corpus

The backgrounds of the men who were called to the religious life at Villers are more varied than the three distinct vocations might suggest. This corpus is comprised of the *vitae* of nobles, men of middling or indeterminate social standing and peasants. These men enjoyed varying degrees of success within their social spheres, Charles, Gobertus and Walter were influential nobles, Abundus was loved by those he encountered in school and Petrus had seemingly always been a shepherd. The *vitae* also depict considerable variation in the age at which the saints entered the religious life, Charles, Arnulfus, Simon and Walter entered in early adulthood; Abundus had been schooled in a monastery, but taken vows as an adult and Godefridus the Sacristan had spent, at least, his early adolescence in a Benedictine house. The accounts of the brothers' educational backgrounds reflect the same multiplicity: Charles attended the University of Paris, Abundus had been schooled in a local Cistercian monastery and Nicholaos had no formal education, but was taught by the Holy Spirit.

99. UC c. 6, pp. 64-66; UC c. 16, pp. 73-74; RC c. 11. Cf. VAR bk. 1, c. 3, par. 20, p. 612; Nimal, *Villers et Aulne*, pp. 154-55.

100. AGR 11022

Despite this variation, the corpus depicts a certain amount of thematic unity. Many *vitae* attach importance to conversion, visionary experiences, Marian devotion and chivalry, which, in keeping with the ideals of the Peace of God, demanded great emphasis on charity. These themes transcend the limits of social background and level of education. The nobles Walter, Charles and Gobertus, as well as those of indeterminate social standing, such as Simon and Arnulfus, experienced dramatic post-adolescent callings to conversion, which continued to develop throughout their lives. Virtually all of the Villers saints had some form of visionary experience. Despite dissimilar backgrounds, Gobertus, Godefridus Pachomius and Arnulfus were all devoted to the Blessed Virgin. The same is true of chivalry, which is portrayed as a vocation in the *lives* of the men who were knights before entering the religious life—Charles, Walter and Gobertus—but is also used in reference to spiritual combat in the *vitae* of Abundus, Arnulfus and Petrus. The similarity in the devotional practices of these remarkably different men suggests a common underlying factor, the obvious possibility being their masculinity.

Feminine Devotion

The *vitae* of the Liègeoise *mulieres sanctae* have provided a basis for much of the scholarship of feminine devotional practice. The group of *vitae* is comparable to the Villers corpus: it consists of twelve thirteenth-century texts and includes *vitae* from saints who followed three different vocations within the Cistercian Order. The hagiographic corpus of the *mulieres sanctae* consists of the *vitae* of two abbesses, Lutgard of Aywières and Juliana of Mont Cornillon; five nuns, Alice of Schaerbeek, Ida of Nivelles, Beatrice of Nazareth, Ida of Léau and Ida of Louvain; and four lay religious, or beguines, Christina of St. Trond, Margaret of Ypres, Juette of Huy, and Marie d'Oignies.[101]

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101. The dates and basic biographical information for these women is summarised by many scholars including Jennifer Carpenter, Caroline Walker Bynum and Walter Simons. See also Appendix A to this thesis.

Themes which are common in the *lives* of these women, including purgatorial piety, visionary experiences, charity and physical asceticism, are often labelled "feminine." The *vitae mulierum* both emphasise such practices and are among the first textual witnesses to these forms of devotion. Christina of St. Trond endured a "lived purgatory," which appears as dreadful as anything in the afterlife could be. Lutgard of Aywières gained a reputation as a friend to those in purgatory and Marie d'Oignies experienced a vision of the hands of the suffering souls reaching out to her in supplication.[102]

The somatic character of these women's spirituality went beyond concern for the suffering souls. Many of the *vitae* emphasise the fragility of these women's bodies: Ida is inflicted with what appears to be epilepsy and Alice of Schaerbeek suffered from leprosy. In each instance, the *vita* stresses the saint's weakness, but reminds its audience that despite corporeal limitations, each of these women was able to attain great heights of sanctity.

In addition to physical infirmity, these *vitae* portray other, seemingly peculiar, forms of religious behaviour such as excessive fasting, castigation of the flesh or observing vigils. At first glance, these devotional practices seem reminiscent of psychological disturbance or hysteria; however, close examination can reveal a theological message. Through emphasising physical infirmity as a *topos* and portraying the intensely somatic character of the ideal religious behaviour of the saints, hagiographers of the high Middle Ages emphasised that, despite its dualistic overtones, orthodox theology did not advocate rejection of the body.[103] Instead, as was particularly important given the prevailing Cathar concern,

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102. VLA bk. 2, c. 1, par. 9; cf. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 78-79. VMO bk. 1, par. 27; cf. VCM c. 1, par. 4-6; VIN c. 5; VLA bk. 1, c. 2, par. 14.

103. André Vauchez, "La sainteté arme contre l'hérésie: la *Vie de Marie d'Oignies* par Jacques de Vitry," in *Saints, prophètes et visionnaires: Le pouvoir surnaturel au Moyen Age*, ed. André Vauchez (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999), pp. 175-81.

they illustrated ways in which the body could both be transformed through devotional practice and become a tool on the journey to salvation.[104]

This use of the body as a tool is particularly emphasised in the *life* of Christina of St. Trond. Christina's hagiographer, Thomas de Cantimpré, describes the extravagant asceticism—torment in fire, icy water and the gallows—that she subjected herself to on behalf of the suffering souls in purgatory. Towards the end of the *vita*, Christina begins to embrace her body physically and acknowledge the role that it played in her journey towards the divine,

> After resting a short while in silence, Christina would experience burning joy and dissolve in sweetest laughter at a holy thought from God. Taking her feet in her both hands, Christina would kiss the soles with greatest affection, saying: "O sweetest body! Why have I cursed you? Why have I reviled you? Surely you obeyed me in every good work I undertook with God's help?"[105]

By including this passage in the *vita Christinae*, Thomas nullifies the dualistic overtones of Christina's criticism of her body and by extension her earlier ascetic activity. Instead of a rejection of her flesh, Christina's torments make her physical body a central component of her spirituality. It is through her torment that Christina is able to effect satisfaction for the sins of those in purgatory and to demonstrate the torments awaiting unrepentant sinners in the afterlife. Similar, if less extreme, use of the body also occurs in the *vitae* of other *mulieres sanctae.* For examples, Lutgard of Aywières endured long fasts to make satisfaction for the sins of heretics and Beatrice of Nazareth "scourged herself with the rod of correction," during her childhood.

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104. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast,* pp. 294-95.

105. "Quiescens paululum cum silentio, et cogitatione sancta in Deum sincerius incalescens, in risum dulcissimum resolvebatur, et tolens ambabus manibus pedes suos, cum maximo affectu deosculabatur pantas eius, atque dicebat: O dulcissimum corpus! Quare verberavi te? Quare convincia intuli tibi? Numquid obedisti mihi in omne opus bonum, quod Deo auctore aggressa sum facere? " (VCM c. 5, par. 48).

As well as being identified with their own bodies, women are thought to have had a particular affinity for the human Christ. Holy women from Liège, particularly Juliana of Mont Cornillon, were devoted to Christ's physical body in the Eucharist. Beatrice of Nazareth experienced a sense of inner peace at the moment of consecration, while Marie d'Oignies and Ida of Nivelles experienced visions of a child appearing between the celebrant's hands when the bread became the body of Christ. In keeping with this theme, Juette and Christina showed extravagant eucharistic longings; and Ida of Louvain experienced a sweet taste in her mouth when hearing the words "*verbum caro factus est.*" Lutgard was devoted to Christ's passion and regularly used a crucifix as the focus of her meditation. Her female contemporaries, predominantly Ida of Nivelles, experienced visions of holding and caressing the infant Jesus.

Hagiographic portrayals of eucharistic miracles emphasised belief in the efficacy of the sacrament; emphasis on these women's devotion to Christ's humanity was a witness against the Cathar belief that Christ would not deign to be physically present in the material world. Both explanations are in keeping with, and serve to facilitate a deeper understanding of religious belief in the high Middle Ages. However, neither the doctrine of transubstantiation nor fear of the Cathar doctrine was exclusively feminine. As is made clear in chapters three and four of this thesis, these were also matters of concern to the Villers brothers and their hagiographers. Further study is necessary in order to determine the extent to which a saint's gender influenced the portrayals of devotion to the human Christ in his or her *vita.*

As is alluded to here and developed later in this thesis, the devotional themes prominent in the Villers corpus and in the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* are similar, though not identical. This thematic similarity combined with temporal and geographic proximity of the texts would be enough to justify including them in a comparative study. However,

the case for comparing the Liègeois *sancti* and *sanctae* goes beyond this. As is indicated from the *vitae* and supplementary archival material a network of social ties connected the Villers brothers and the Liègeoise *mulieres sanctae*. These connections are further enhanced by a series of codicological connections between the two groups of *vitae*.

Interaction between the Liègeois Sancti and Sanctae

In Liège, the precept advocated in early Cistercian texts of fleeing the world appears to be more an ideal than a reflection of reality by the thirteenth century. Instead of praying in the isolation of their monastic desert, Liègeoise Cistercian *vitae* portray their subjects' interacting regularly with those outside the community. More importantly, from its beginnings the Villers community appears to have had regular contact, both social and pastoral, with holy women.[106] In the early thirteenth century, the Chapter General discouraged Cistercian houses from playing an active role in the affairs of women and repeatedly corrected the abbot of Villers on this point.[107] Despite an official warning, Villers continued active paternity of several women's communities and the Villers brothers maintained friendships with, directed and sought guidance from local holy women.

As the Chapter General's recurring prohibition indicates, Villers continued to attend to the souls of religious women into the early thirteenth century. Having the paternity of a religious community both entitled the men's community to a share in the women's goods and gave them the responsibility for administering the sacraments and providing guidance for the religious women. Rather than being simply nominal, the admiration that male hagiographers expressed for their female subjects seems to be both sincere and common among

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106. Lefèvre, "L'abbaye de Villers," pp. 183-230.

107. Statuta 1227 c. 18, p. 59; cf. Statuta 1228 c. 16, p. 68. Cf. Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, pp. 46-47.

Liègeois religious men. As is mentioned above, women frequently play a role in directing the Villers saints to the religious life. This is not only true of instances such as Walter's devotion to the Virgin, but also of Liègeoise holy women, such as the abovementioned Juette and Emmeloth, whom the Villers brothers approach for direction and guidance.[108]

The Villers brothers and the *mulieres sanctae* interacted regularly and called upon one another's aid when necessary. The Villers abbots James (1175-77) and William (1221-37/38) regularly travelled to Nivelles to administer to the spiritual needs of the beguine community.[109] On one occasion, Lutgard the abbess of Aywières encountered a young nun who was plagued by a demon. Lutgard immediately recognised the danger that this demon posed and called upon the aid of her saintly contemporary Simon of Aulne.[110] When the monks of Villers began the procedure of electing a new abbot they would ask the beguines of Nivelles to pray for the future of the monastery.[111]

Arnulfus' interaction with a local recluse showed a rather unusual picture of the balance between gender and power in hagiographic texts. This recluse, whom Arnulfus met while delivering bread to the community which surrounded Villers, used to provide instruction for a certain young cleric. As her role as instructress progressed, the recluse became increasingly worried that the cleric's feelings towards her were becoming inappropriate. She eventually refused to continue to teach the cleric. Shortly afterwards the

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108. VGA bk. 2, c. 1, par. 37, p. 383; VAB c. 4, p. 15.

109. CV p. 200. Cf. Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, p. 46.

110. VSA par. 44 ff. 222 r-v. Simon may also have known Marie d'Oignies.

111. Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, p. 46.

112. VAR bk. 2, c. 4, par. 33-34, pp. 623-24.

recluse became ill. Upon seeing her, Arnulfus realised what was causing her pain and advised her to continue the relationship with the priest.[112]

Gobertus of Aspermont had a close friendship with Juliana, the abbess of Mont Cornillon.[113] Although there is little available information about their earthly interaction, after Juliana's death Gobertus arranged for her burial behind the main altar of Villers between Arnulfus of Villers and Abundus of Huy. As well as these monks the bodies of two abbesses (Helewidis and Marquina) and a beguine (Maria of Grez), were buried behind the main altar in the church. Juliana remained buried in this place until 1536. Juliana's resting place indicates that she was both known to and revered by the Villers community. In the early thirteenth century, the Cistercian Chapter General attempted to discourage the practice of burying individuals who were not members of a particular community within the walls of a Cistercian monastery.[114]

Evidence of burial places and the relics of the Villers saints and the *mulieres sanctae* emphasises the mutual respect between these two groups. Villers possessed the relics of Juliana. Similarly, many women's houses ended up with the relics of the Villers saints.

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113. Juliana's hagiographer speaks of her close friendship with the Marie, the Empress of Namur (VJM, bk. 2, c. 7, par. 35-36, p. 471. Cf. H. Schuermans, "Les reliques de la B. Julienne de Cornillon à l'abbaye de Villers," *Annales de la Société archéologique de l'arrondissement de Nivelles* 7 (1903): 1-5; *Monasticon Belge* t. 1, vol. 1, pp. 104-05). See also, VJM, bk. 2, c. 8, par. 50, pp. 475-75; *Life of Juliana-ET*, p. 158, n. 64; *Monasticon Belge* t. 4, vol. 2, pp. 355, 376. Gobertus' wife was also named Juliana, however the two are not the same. Juliana of Mont Cornillon's hagiographer tells us that she had been devoted to Christ from her earliest days (VJM, bk. 1, c. 1, par. 1-3, pp. 444-45), and that she had never been tempted by carnal desire any more than "she had been tempted to eat the bones of the dead" (VJM bk. 2, c. 1, par. 2, pp. 457-58). Lefèvre reminds us that Juliana of Aspremont remained living in the world after her husband's entry to Villers (Lefèvre, "Gobert, seigneur d'Aspremont," p. 9).

114. "Consuetudines Ordinis Cisterciensis," chap. 27. Cf. Schuermans, "Les reliques de la B. Julienne," pp. 61-63; Robert Lechat, "Les Bienheureux de l'abbaye de Villers," *AB* 42 (1924): 372; Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, p. 46; Moreau, *L'abbaye*, p. 106). For Juliana's connection with Villers see, Simons, "Appendix One" in *Cities of Ladies*, 78B, pp. 291-92. Villers was still permitted to bury non-Cistercians who were beneficial to the community (AGR 10966, f. 27).

115. VGS c. 2, par. 13, p. 536; Moreau, *L'abbaye*, p. xxv.

Godefridus the Sacristan's relics were eventually claimed by Gisele, the founder of La Cambre, which was the home of Alice of Schaerbeek.[115] In what may be Goswin's attempt at humour, an unusual garment that Arnulfus had made from hedgehog pelts found its way to the house of *Locus spineti*, the modern Notre Dame de Épinlieu.[116]

In addition to maintaining contacts with women, the Villers brothers, particularly Arnulfus, were instrumental in founding more than one house for religious women. When she was troubled by a military siege on her lands, Blanche of Castille sent a monk to ask Arnulfus' advice. Arnulfus responded by asking her to build a convent, Argensolles, to house women wishing to live according to the Cistercian custom.[117] Immediately after the construction began, Blanche's troubles ceased. Argensolles became an influential Cistercian house, which continued to be prominent in the southern Low Countries into the early modern period.

Later, Arnulfus played a role in founding the house of *Valle rosarum*, the home of Ida of Louvain. A certain nobleman from Liège who was considering founding a community for religious women approached abbot William of Villers. Arnulfus immediately identified this man as the influential Aegidius Bertholdus and before Aegidius spoke, Arnulfus informed his abbot of the visitor's intentions. Aegidius was so overcome at Arnulfus' ability to read his thoughts that any doubts he had concerning the project immediately fled from his mind. Aegidius was an important patron of both Villers and Aywières. He is mentioned in the archives as donating gifts of land and revenues.[118]

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116. VAC, bk. 2, par. 67. Villers and Aulne also had a close connection with the house of Notre Dame de Épinlieu, which was founded in 1216 at the instigation of Jeanne of Flanders (Moreau, *L'abbaye*, pp. 110-14. Cf. *Gallia Christiana*, bk. 5, cc. 71-74). Épinlieu was connected with the Cistercian Order from the outset: its first prioress, Beatrice of Lens, was from a family known to support the house of Aulne (Berlière, *Monasticon Belge*, bk. 1, vol. 2, p. 365).

117. VAR bk. 2, c. 4, par. 31, p. 623. Cf. Matt 23: 37; Luke 13: 34.

118. Archives Écclesiastique du Brabant, 10965, f. 12.

Archival evidence emphasises that the Villers brothers and the *mulieres sanctae* lived in the same social world. Thomas' *vita Christinae* illustrates that its subject, Christina of St. Trond, had a relationship based on love and mutual admiration with count Louis of Looz.[119] Louis addressed Christina as "mother," and sought her guidance on all manner of state affairs. He respected her relationship with God and regularly pointed out that he was not the "lord" who was the object of Christina's regular praise. On his deathbed, Louis had Christina hear his confession, though, as Thomas points out, Christina made no pretence of giving sacramental absolution.[120]

At the same time, Christina's Louis was a known patron of Villers. As the Villers archives indicate, Louis was connected with the grange of Mellemont, where the notorious Arnulfus lived towards the end of his life.[121] Another prominent patron of Villers who was buried in the house is Guy of Dampierre (+1251).[122] Guy was the son of Margaret of Flanders and like his mother was known for his support of the beguine movement.[123]

It was not uncommon for religious houses, regardless of the sex of their members, to have common patrons. The archives of Villers and Aywières indicate that the two houses shared many common benefactors and, on occasion, were asked to share assets.[124] The interconnected networks of patronage emphasise again, the brothers and the *mulieres sanc-*

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119. VCM c. 4, par. 42-46, pp. 657-58. For a general discussion of holy women acting as advisors to men in positions of authority see, Karen L. King, "Prophetic Power and Women's Authority," in *Women Preachers and Prophets*, pp. 29-32; Rosalyn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices* (Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 1999), pp. 19-40; Blamires, *Case for Women*, pp. 195-98; Michel Lauwers, "Paroles des femmes, sainteté feminine: l'Église du XIIIe Siècle face aux béguines," in *La Critique Historique à l'Épreuve*, ed. Jacques Paquet (Bruxelles: Publications des Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis, 1989), pp. 99-115). Cf. Jane Chance, "Speaking in *Propria Persona*: Authorizing the Subject as a Political Act in Late Medieval Female Spirituality," in *Texts and Contexts*, pp. 270-71.

120. VCM c. 4, par. 44.

121. AGR 10965 f. 3.

122. AGR 10965 f. 17.

123. Guy's patronage was attested to on his tombstone which is now in the ruins of Villers. I am grateful to Monica Sandor for alerting me to his connection with the beguine movement. See, Alphonse Wauters "Guillaume de Dampierre," in *Biographie Nationale* (Brussels: Bruylant-Christophe & Cie, 1884-1885), cc. 444-49.

tae were subject to the same social and political influences. Although the gender of these two groups differs, the Cistercian brothers and the *mulieres sanctae* lived in the same social world and were subject to a myriad of shared influences. As the Liègeoise holy women have been used by scholars such as Caroline Walker Bynum to define feminine religious behaviour, it is logical that the Villers *vitae* can do the same for masculinity and the devotional practices of men. As is shown in Chapter Four, it is also clear that examining the two groups in conjunction with each other provides considerable insight into the debate about the interconnectedness of gender and religious behaviour.

Textual and Codicological Relations

When exploring the medieval past from the twenty-first century, one must keep in mind that questions of audience are, necessarily, speculative. While it is impossible to reconstruct the audience of the Villers *vitae*, codicological evidence and contemporary texts indicate that the Villers brothers were familiar to Cistercian audiences in later medieval society.[125] Apart from the *vita Arnulfi,* there are few extant manuscripts of the Villers *vitae*. However, the *Chronica villariensis* was popular and remained in wide circulation into the early modern period. Moreover, the Villers brothers are mentioned in texts such as Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogus miraculorum*. Individual brothers, such as Simon, caught the attention of the papacy.[126]

In 1997, Jennifer Carpenter began to survey the manuscripts of the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae*. Although her efforts are a valuable beginning, as she points out, her work

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124. AGR 5338 f. 60 v; AGR 30385, f. 13.

125. There are at least eight extant manuscripts of the *Chronica villariensis* of varied provenance and dating from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century.

126. The second and third books of the *Chronica villariensis* are vaguely reminiscent of the collections of *exempla* designed for teaching. See, Cassey, "Herbert of Clairvaux," pp. 37-64. Herbert's collection of miracles stories includes a number of incidents that are found in both the *Chronica villariensis* and the *vitae* of the Villers corpus.

127. Carpenter, "A New Heaven," pp. xxvii-xxxii.

has been compiled mainly from manuscript catalogues, and must be considered a guide rather than a comprehensive account.[127] Despite their prominence in modern scholarship, the precise history of the texts of the *vitae* is obscured by something of a codicological matrix. The *vitae* are currently scattered throughout Europe and were copied from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. Some have been translated into the vernacular at uncertain dates; others have been rebound in collections which have varying degrees of relevance to thirteenth-century Liègeoise hagiography and, often vague, connections to the Villers corpus.[128]

There is an overwhelming need for these texts to be properly catalogued and critical editions produced. However, there is still substantial evidence to connect these texts to the Villers *vitae*: at least three of the *vitae mulierum*—the *lives* of Juliana, Ida of Nivelles and Marie—were included in the Villers library at the beginning of the fourteenth century.[129] A manuscript, which originates from Villers, contains the Office of Arnulfus and a Mass for the feast of Marie d'Oignies.[130] In addition to simply being a codicological link between the Liègeoise *vitae sanctorum* and *sanctarum*, this manuscript (BR II 1658) offers further evidence that the Villers community both knew Marie and honoured her sanctity.

BR II 1658 contains a Mass for the feast of Marie d'Oignies and the Office text for the feast of Arnulfus. The two feasts were in close temporal proximity; Marie's feast is 23 June and Arnulfus' is 30 June. However, as the Bollandist collections record the *vitae* of many saints, with feasts in later June, BR II 1658 speaks of something that goes beyond temporal association. Marie and Arnulfus were honoured by the Villers community: both

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128. Thomas Falmagne, Personal Correspondence, 04 December, 2000. The manuscripts that most closely link the Villers *vitae* with the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* were, most likely, not compiled until the fourteenth or fifteenth century (Falmagne, *Un texte en contexte*, pp. 39 and 47).

129. Falmagne, "Le Scriptorium," p. 37.

130. Falmagne, "La spécificité de la bibliothèque," p. 102; Missone, "Office Liturgique," pp. 270-78.

as local saints and as individuals whose somatic spirituality made them new models of holiness. The cantor of the Villers community who, as the text indicates, knew many witnesses of Arnulfus' holiness, recorded Arnulfus' *vita*; the abbot Conrad of Villers visited Marie's grave regularly.[131] The connection between Marie and Arnulfus is symptomatic of a more pervasive connection between the *mulieres sanctae* and the Villers brothers. If only for reasons of geography, this connection persisted throughout the later Middle Ages: the two manuscripts containing several *vitae mulierum* and the *vitae* of Walter and Werricus or Arnulfus were likely compiled in the fifteenth century.[132]

BR II 1658 is bound in parchment. The folia are somewhat uneven. It is written in a single hand, in a clear script. The first section of the manuscript is text-only and is written in brown ink. The majority of the text is written under bars bearing musical notation. There are sections throughout the manuscript that are written without music and appear to be prayers which were recited.[133] It is also significant that the prayers which were a standard part of the Liturgy contain more abbreviation than the sections which contain specific details that pertain to Arnulfus or Marie.[134] The rubrics for the Mass on the feast of Marie read that various prayers continue in the same manner as for the feast of Mary Magdalene.[135] Rubrication is used throughout the manuscript to convey direction or to refer to proper hymns which were used at suitable points in the liturgy. This is a further in-

131. VAR prologue, p. 608; BUA bk. 1, c. 9, par. 3, p. 37; cf. CV p. 199.

132. Falmagne, *Un texte en contexte*, pp. 39, 47; cf. Falmagne, "Le Scriptorium," p. 37.

133. BR II 1658 ff. 2r, 6r-v, 9r.

134. Cf. *Liturgia Horarum iuxta Rita Romanum* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000).

135. BR II 1658 ff. 8v, 9r (cf. Falmagne, *Un texte en contexte*, p. 54; Misonne, "Office Liturgique," pp. 279-80). This may have been a formula applied to female saints, or the order of Mass may have been influenced by the association between Marie d'Oignies and Mary Magdalene in the Low Countries (Lauwers, "Noli Me Tangere," pp. 209-68; Misonne, "Office Liturgique," p. 272).

136. For the format of the liturgical offices see, Parsch, *Breviary Explained*, pp. 155-184; Andrew Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office: A Guide to their Organization and Terminology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), pp. 50-80.

dication that the two texts were intended for communal liturgical use rather than personal devotion.[136] As a further indication that Marie was honoured at Villers, it should be noted that the manuscript containing the Mass and Office also originally contained the *vitae* of Marie and Arnulfus. They were bequeathed to W. Arndt, presumably for use in compiling the *Monumenta Germania Historia* and are now lost.[137]

The *vita Arnulfi* has proved central to the Villers corpus and is seemingly also connected to the *life* of Ida of Nivelles. Building on Simone Roisin's demonstration of the textual similarities between the *vita Arnulfi* and the *vita Abundi*, Martin Cawley has noted stylistic similarities between these texts and the *life* of Ida of Nivelles. Hence, in Cawley's view, the three texts are the work of a single author. If indeed, Goswin recorded the spirituality of a choir monk, lay brother and female saint, the possibilities for further study on the extent to which gender and ecclesastical position influence portrayals of holiness are endless.

Cawley's argument is largely drawn from stylistic similarity, which could as easily indicate that the *vitae* of Ida, Arnulfus and Abundus were composed by two authors with similar influences or backgrounds: in this case, possibly two members of the Villers community. Regardless of its author, the *vita* of Ida of Nivelles was closely connected to Villers. It was recorded in the Villers library catalogue of 1309 and one of the earliest extant copies of this text was written in the scriptorium of Villers. Moreover, it is obvious from the text of the *vita Idae* that its author was familiar with the collections of *exempla* that circulated in male Cistercian houses during the high Middle Ages. Many of the incidents recorded in connection with Ida, for example, tales of the Virgin presenting a saint with the Christ child or the saint portrayed battling demons which attacked members of the community in the infirmary were common in collections such as Herbert's *De miraculis* and Caesarius' *Dialogus miraculorum*. Possibly the most interesting incident,

137. This is indicated by an attachment to BR II 1658. Cf. Misonne, "Office Liturgique," p. 267.

with respect to gender, is a tale which parallels an oft-repeated story of the Virgin: in more than one of the Villers *vitae*, as well as in the miracle collections of Caesarius and Herbert, the Blessed Virgin is portrayed refreshing the monks as they wearied from their labours—either manual or liturgical. Ida's *vita* contains a similar incident, but instead of the Blessed Virgin, a woman, refreshing her Son's male servants, Christ, as a twelve-year-old boy, appears before the sisters and brings comfort to each according to her merits.[138]

Conclusion

The Liègeois male and female saints were members of a multifarious and changing society. Their responses to its social and religious changes would have been subject to many influences. Though the Cistercian fathers may have desired to flee the world, and Bernard may have advocated learning from the woods and trees, the Cistercians in thirteenth-century Liège were very much involved with the secular community. Similarly, the *mulieres sanctae* were prominent and influential members of Liègeoise society. The considerable archival and textual evidence of their interaction indicate that the two groups of saints both influenced and were shaped by their social world. As is explained later in this thesis, there are many similarities between the religious behaviour of the Liègeois male and female saints. These correspondences, as well as the obvious textual and social links justify examining these *vitae* in conjunction with one another. Given that the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* have been studied extensively as codifications of "feminine" spirituality, the close link between these women and the Villers brothers emphasises that these *vitae virorum* are ideal texts to use for exploring, or questioning the existence of, "masculine" spirituality. As is outlined in the introduction, the two subsequent chapters focus on the four themes of conversion, visionary experiences, Marian devotion and chivalry. Chapter Two explores the prevalence of these themes in contemporary devotional texts including

138. VIN c. 19.

works that pertain to the Cistercian liturgy, various theological treatises and contemporary hagiography, including the *vitae* of Liègeoise female saints. These themes have been selected after a close reading of the Villers *vitae*. By comparing the ways in which these threads are used by the hagiographers of male and female saints, it is possible to present a nuanced picture of the role of gender in hagiographic constructions of holiness. To facilitate this discussion, which is the focus of chapters three and four, it is first necessary to understand the role of conversion, visionary experiences, Marian devotion and the chivalrous ideal in the devotional climate of the thirteenth century.

Chapter Two: Spiritual Themes in Western European Devotion and Their Relevance to the Villers Corpus: Conversion, Visionary experiences, Marian Devotion and The Vocation of Chivalry

It is almost impossible to catalogue all the religious movements and forms of devotion that saw their genesis in the high Middle Ages. Yet, in order to understand the portrayals of sanctity found in the Villers corpus, some attention to the prevailing spiritual milieu is necessary.[1] As is stated in the previous chapter, the Villers *vitae* depict men from diverse backgrounds who have a variety of ways of showing their dedication to the Lord; however, the *vitae* also reveal a certain thematic unity. The themes of conversion, visionary experience, Marian devotion and the crusading ideal are central to the portrayals of holiness in many of these texts. These same themes also play a prominent role in the devotional climate of the high Middle Ages. As the Villers *vitae*, like all texts, are products of their time, it is vital to understand the prevailing devotional climate from which they emerged.

This chapter examines the aforementioned themes in *vitae*, theological writings and liturgical texts from throughout Europe during the high Middle Ages. The *vitae* that are used as background include both influential saints from throughout Europe and saints, predominantly the *mulieres sanctae*, whose cults were prominent in the southern Low Countries. This chapter both presents an overview of varieties of devotion in the high Middle Ages and illustrates more localised manifestations of these forms of religious expression.

Conversion

Medieval hagiography abounds with stories in which divine grace converted even the most heinous of sinners.[2] It is important to note that even tales of spectacular conver-

1. Lifshitz, "Beyond Positivism and Genre," p. 99.

2. Cf. Rom 5: 20 "Lex autem subintravit, ut abundaret delictum; *ubi autem abundavit peccatum, superabundavit gratia.*"

sions—the stories of Mary Magdalene, Paul, Mary of Egypt, or Augustine—portrayed the initial experience of repentance as the beginning of a new life.[3] The first occurrence of contrition in a saint's life, such as Paul's experience on the road to Damascus or the Magdalene in tears at Christ's feet, should be understood simply as a *call* to conversion. The continued restructuring of personal mores or the return of a sinner to grace was a life-long process.[4] The discussion below both touches on the importance of the call and gives some background regarding the ways in which later medieval hagiography depicted the journey of conversion in the *vitae* of holy men and women.

Dramatic repentance was a popular model in the *vitae* of the high Middle Ages, but it was far from being the only acceptable model of sanctity or conversion. As is mentioned above, conversion must not be understood as a single moment. Instead, conversion, or *conversio morum* was a continual call to devote one's life to Christ.[5] The journey of conversion was often understood as a threefold journey from repentance, through purgation and ending in illumination. Variations on this path have existed since patristic times, but an example of the way in which it was understood in the high Middle Ages is found in the writings of Bonaventure.[6]

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3. Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity*, pp. 28-29; Jean Leclercq, "Conversion to the Monastic Life: Who, Why and How?" in *Studiosorum Speculum: Studies in Honour of Louis J. Lekai O. Cist.*, ed. Francis R. Swietek and John R. Sommerfeldt (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1993), pp. 209-11. For examples of contrition see, DM t. 1, bk. 2, pp. 61-122, passim

4. DM t. 1, bk. 1, c. 1-2, pp. 5-8; ibid, bk. 2, c. 1, pp. 61-63.

5. Philip Schmitz, "Conversatio Morum," DS vol. 2, cc. 2206-2212.

6. Bonaventure's writings on the threefold path to conversion were influenced by earlier sources, significantly Pseudo-Dionysis. Cf. Bonaventure, *De Triplici Via alias Incendium Amoris*, Fontes Christiani no. 14 (Frieburg: Herder, 1993), Prologus, p. 94. For Bonaventure's familiarity with the work of Pseudo-Dionysis see, Aimé Solignac, "Voies," in DS 16, cc. 1204-1206. Pseudo-Dionysis' writings on the ascent of the soul and the celestial hierarchy were included in the 1309 catalogue of the Villers library (Falmagne, *Un texte en contexte*, pp. 373, 375). For other models of conversion as a continuous journey from the high Middle Ages see, DM t. 1, bk. 1, c. 1-2, pp. 5-8; Bernard of Clairvaux, "Ad Clericos de Conversione," pp. 323-430 in ed. J[ean] Leclercq, H. Rochais and Ch. Talbot, *Le Précepte et la dispense la conversion*. Sources Chrétiennes 457 (Paris: les éditions du CERF, 2000).

From biblical times, repentance had been a recognised part of the Christian tradition. Paul, Mary Magdalene, Augustine and the other early penitents received a spontaneous gift of grace. Medieval preachers, on the other hand, were not always content to wait for the Spirit, and instead sought ways to create ideal conditions for their audience to receive this gift. To facilitate the beginnings of the journey in their audiences hagiographers often made use of stories of those who achieved eternal joy through repentance. The stories of early penitents, in particular Mary Magdalene, were familiar in sermons and hagiography from the later Middle Ages. These tales emphasise that preachers tried to remind the faithful that the mercy of the Lord was available for any who were willing to accept it.[7]

Unlike the early penitents, later medieval repentant sinners did not generally convert from lives of sexual promiscuity or enacting persecutions. Instead, they generally left lives which were focussed on secular, social or mercantile concerns rather than directed towards the divine will. While dramatic conversions were not unheard of, most of the later medieval penitent saints were people to whom ordinary men and women could relate: they lived in the world and were often portrayed experiencing the ordinary concerns of secular life.[8] Typically, medieval penitents, such as Francis of Assisi or Elezear of Sabran (+1323) repented for crimes no more heinous than some level of interest in secular matters.

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7. Jacques de Vitry, "In festo Marie Magdalene," appendix to Michel Lauwers, "<<Noli Me Tangere>> Marie Madeleine, Marie d'Oignies et les pénitents du XIIIe siècle," *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome Moyen Âge – Temps Modernes* 104 (1992): 266-68; Peter Abelard, *Sermo 13* in PL 178, cc. 484-89; Honorius Augustodunensis, "De Sancta Maria Magdalena" in *Speculum Ecclesiae*, PL 172, cc. 979-82; Pseudo-Origen, "A Homily of Mary Magdalene," pp. 64-65, in Chrysogonus Waddell, "Pseudo-Origen's homily on Mary Magdalene at the Tomb of Jesus," *Liturgy* 23 (1989): 45-69. Cf. Anne T. Thayer, "Intercessors, Examples and Rewards: The Roles of the Saints in the Penitential Themes of Representative Medieval Sermon Collections," in *Models of Holiness*, pp. 345-48; Beverly Mayne Kienzle, "The Prostitute Preacher" in *Women Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity*. Ed. Beverly Kienzle and Pamela Walker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 99-113.

8. André Vauchez, "A Twelfth-century Novelty: The Lay Saints of Urban Italy," in *The Laity in the Middle Ages* ed. Daniel Bornstein, trans. Margery J. Schneider (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), pp. 51-72; Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, pp. 87-88.

At the time of their initial call to conversion, the new penitents, such as Francis of Assisi, Margaret of Ypres, Valdes of Lyons or Juette of Huy, were typically members of the laity who lived in an urban environment. Francis was born to a wealthy, mercantile family in Assisi in the late twelfth century. Around the year 1208, he renounced a life of secular wealth to take up the cross of apostolic poverty. He eventually founded an order of mendicant Friars, the Franciscans, who became known throughout Europe for their poverty, simplicity and imitation of Christ.[9] In the same period, Margaret of Ypres repented of her desire to spend time with a youth of the city, Juette of Huy repented a desire to end an unhappy marriage and Valdes, like Francis, renounced his material wealth and financial affairs.[10] Through emphasising the ordinary ways in which these penitents lived, hagiographers aimed to present them as realistic models on which their audience could base their religious behaviour. Obviously, hagiographers did not intend their audiences to imitate the more extreme aspects of devotion, which are discussed below. Instead they sought to raise a general awareness of devotional themes which were central to the prevailing spiritual climate of their time such as concern for the souls in purgatory or devotion to the Eucharist.[11]

Despite the seemingly unremarkable nature of their sins, the conversions experienced by medieval penitents were every bit as dramatic as their precursors from the early days of Christianity. The image of Francis casting off his robe in the marketplace had an effect comparable to the tale of Luke's penitent sinner, generally understood as Mary

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9. C. H. Lawrence, *The Friars* (London and New York: Longman, 1994), pp. 26-42.

10. VMY c. 5; VJH bk. 1, c. 9, par. 26, p. 868; Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 62-63. The *Gnaden-Vita* of Friedrich Sunder records the *life* of the Dominican confessor to the nuns of Engelthal. Cf. Siegfried Ringler, *Viten- und Offenbarungsliteratur in Frauenklöstern des Mittelalters* (München: Artemis Verlag, 1980), p. 392: 37-42. (I am grateful to Bernard McGinn for bringing this text to my attention). Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, pp. 48-58. A popular theory among modern scholars states that the path of conversion is typical in the *vitae* of male saints, while their female contemporaries show a desire for a holy life from childhood (Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society* pp. 87-88; Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 24-25).

Magdalene, wiping Christ's feet with her hair.[12] Possibly due to the influence of the *vita* of Francis, the *topos* of renouncing worldly wealth grew popular, particularly in the *vitae* of men who converted in late adolescence. The precise moment of the initial call to contrition became increasingly prominent in saints' *lives* from the high Middle Ages. In the *vitae* of holy men, the initial experience of contrition often coincided with the saint experiencing and overcoming sexual temptation. It was not uncommon for the *vitae* of men to portray their subjects experiencing nocturnal visitations from Satan in the guise of a comely woman.[13] The *vitae* of their female contemporaries rarely discuss carnal desire, but often portray the initial experience of contrition coinciding with the saint experiencing romantic love.[14] *Vitae* were not so concerned with relating factual details about an individual conversion experience, but with arousing the audiences' empathy by conveying the archetypal experience of contrition and the joys that accompanied forgiveness. This was particularly important in a religious climate that, after 1215, demanded annual sacramental confession and in which the doctrine of purgatory was prominent in popular consciousness.

As an archetype, few models had the appeal of Mary Magdalene, whose name became almost synonymous with repentance and whose cult was prominent throughout later medieval Europe. Although the Magdalene does not play a significant role in the *vitae* discussed in this thesis, her veneration would undoubtedly have been familiar both to the Villers brothers and their hagiographers. Mary Magdalene was a popular figure in Liège: in 1124 bishop Alberon had instituted the official celebration of her feast in the diocese and she was the patroness of many Liègeoise churches, leper houses and begui-

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11. Sweetman, "Christine of St. Trond," pp. 415-23; Hefferman, *Sacred Biography*, pp. 15, 28; Townsend, *Hagiography*, pp. 619-21;

12. Luke 7: 37-50.

13. VPB bk. 1, c. 3, par. 12-16, cc. 230-31; VAR bk. 1, c. 1, par. 6, pp. 609-10. Cf. Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, pp. 81-87.

14. VMY par. 5.

nages.[15] Because the men whose *vitae* are the focus of this thesis were associated with the Cistercian Order, their exposure to the cult of the Magdalene is even more certain. Antiphons in honour of the Magdalene are common in Cistercian breviaries; a manuscript from Villers suggests that the *ordo missae* for the feast of the Magdalene was well-known;[16] in the mid-twelfth century the Cistercian Chapter General stipulated that two Masses be sung in celebration of her feast,[17] and she served as a popular model in Cistercian writings.[18]

Almost nothing is known about the historical person of the Magdalene. As is the case with so many of the women who loved Christ, she is named only infrequently in the canonical scriptures. Instead, the traditions associated with her come from apocryphal texts, legend, and spurious conflation with the desert mothers or nameless women in the gospels.[19] A number of traditions came to be associated with Mary Magdalene throughout the Middle Ages: to Gregory the Great, the Magdalene was a penitent prostitute; to Honourius Augustodunensis, the adulterous wife of the Lord of Magdala; to the gnostic writers she was a female leader in the early Christian community.[20] All that remained con-

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15. Lauwers, "<<Noli Me Tangere>>," pp. 214-16.

16. As mentioned above, the rubrics described in Chapter One which direct parts of the Mass to be carried out in the same way as for the feast of Mary Magdalene may be further evidence of an association between Mary Magdalene and Marie d'Oignies in Liège (BR II 1608, f. 8v, 9r).

17. *Statuta* 1175, bk. 1, c. 4, p. 82; EO 60, c. 17, p. 186. The lay brothers attended Mass on this day (UC c. 4, pp. 62-63).

18. Jean Leclercq, *Le mariage vu par les moines au XIIe siècle* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1983), pp. 136-46.

19. Mary Magdalene is identified as the woman that Jesus freed from seven demons (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2); and as being present at Christ's Crucifixion and Entombment (Matt. 27: 56, 61; 28:1; Mark 15: 40, 47; 16:1; Luke 24:10; John 19:25; 20:1). Katherine Ludwig Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 18-46.

20. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, "Was Mary Magdalene a Magdalen?," in *Media Latinitatis: A Collection of Essays to Mark the Occasion of the Retirement of L. J. Engels*, ed. R. I. A. Nip *et al.* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), pp. 272-74.

stant amidst the varying Magdalenian traditions was that the Magdalene had been a sinner, and through the love of Christ had turned to a path of continued conversion.

Mary Magdalene, often thought to be Luke's unnamed *peccatrix*, was understood as the quintessential penitent sinner: her repentance at Christ's feet was thought so total that she became penitence personified.[21] In this role, Mary Magdalene served as an ideal model for preachers, hagiographers, and monastic reformers who wished to promote the theme of conversion. As Michel Lauwers has pointed out, themes associated with Mary Magdalene, repentance, tears and contrition, became prevalent in thirteenth-century Liègeoise hagiography.[22] As the theme of conversion became more firmly entrenched in the devotional climate of Western Europe, the Magdalene emerged as the model of perfect penitence in hagiography and sermon collections.[23]

The other woman whose cult flourished at this time, the Virgin Mary, represented ideal purity. The Mother of God was a model to which all Christians could aspire, but which none could hope to emulate. The Magdalene on the other hand was human: she had sinned as a human, loved as a woman, and repented as a devout follower of Christ. Sin was thought to be an integral part of human existence; all men and women who desired to live in Christ knew the pain of contrition, and, in the high Middle Ages—through an

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21. Throughout the Middle Ages, the influence of Gregory the Great caused the Magdalene to be identified with the unnamed *peccatrix*, who, in Luke's gospel (Luke 7: 37-50) anointed the feet of Christ (Gregory the Great, "Homilia 33" in *Homilia in evangelia*, PL 76, c. 1276). The common perception of the Magdalene as a sexual sinner was compounded as through an identification of the Magdalene with the penitent whore Mary of Egypt (Jansen, *Making of the Magdalen*, pp. 166-84).

22. Lauwers, "<<Noli Me Tangere>>," pp. 266-68. Cf. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 94, 340 n. 134; idem, *Jesus as Mother*, pp. 137-38; Leclercq, *Le mariage vu par les moines*, pp. 130-36, esp. 133 n. 30.

23. Thayer, "Intercessors, Examples and Rewards," pp. 347-48.

increased emphasis on sacramental confession and absolution—all knew the joy of forgiveness, and so could relate to the story of the Magdalene.[24]

Despite its popularity, the model of the Magdalene was one of many models of sanctity in later medieval Europe. As well as those who converted from a misspent youth, many saints in the later Middle Ages showed a desire to be united with God from their early childhood. When examining the *lives* of such individuals it becomes clear that conversion was more than a single instance of contrition. These "precocious saints" desire to serve God from their earliest days. However, as is the case with saints who spent their youth in a less than laudable manner, the *vitae* of both male and female precocious saints still portray a very definite progression towards sanctity.

New Orders, including the Cistercians, refused to accept oblates. The new strictures on children entering the monastic life ensured that those individuals drawn to traditional monasticism life spend their childhood and adolescence in some other manner. They would then "convert" to a monastic life in their late adolescence or early adulthood, around the age where it became possible to enter a religious house.[25] For this reason it is unsurprising that monastic hagiography of the high Middle Ages did not place as much emphasis as earlier *vitae* on their subjects' holy childhood.[26]

A childhood desire for holiness is often considered characteristic of the *vitae* of female saints. Indeed, due to the unofficial or semi-religious character of feminine piety,

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24. For a discussion of the sacrament of penance see Thomas N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 3-27, 57-82. The fourth Lateran council made annual confession mandatory for both men and women ("Lateran IV," in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner S. J. (London: Sheed and Ward Press, 1990), c. 21, p. 245). For a discussion on the possible effects of the sacrament for women see, Dyan Elliott, "Women and Confession: From Empowerment to Pathology," in *Gendering the Master Narrative*, ed. Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 31-51.

25. Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, pp. 48-72.

26. This pattern had been common in the earlier Middle Ages see, André Vauchez, "Saints admirables et saints imitables: les fonctions de l'hagiographie ont-ellles changé aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age?" in *Saints, prophetès et visionnaires*, pp. 56-57.

this would not be surprising. Nevertheless, the hagiographic record speaks of many male and female children who longed to dedicate their existences to God. Beatrice of Nazareth was an exceptional pious child; John of Cantimpré was a devout child who longed for holiness; as a child, Marie d'Oignies used to follow in the footsteps of Cistercian monks and lay brothers who passed through her village and the adolescent Dodo of Hascha (+ 1231) longed to escape marriage.[27] There are also numerous examples of saints, notably Dominic, whose mothers' prophesied their future holiness in a dream, thus emphasising their holiness before birth.[28] In all *vitae*, the beginnings of conversion are signified by a change. In the *lives* of penitent sinners, the change is often shown in contrition; in the *vitae* of saints who desired holiness from their earliest days it is shown through the saints making personal choices about their spiritual path. In both cases, it is generally followed by a period of active religious behaviour, often physical asceticism or charity.

Like devotion to the Magdalene, physical asceticism was an integral part of the later medieval spiritual climate. As the extensive scholarship on the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* shows, physical asceticism was a common devotional practice in thirteenth-century Liège. This phenomenon has been explained in a variety of ways, but is overwhelmingly seen as a form of *imitatio Christi.* Though many scholars view this as a feminine form of *imitatio Christi,* from the Villers corpus and other *vitae* of holy men, it is evident that physical asceticism was seen as a way for both women and men, particularly laymen, to

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27. VBN c. 2, pp. 7-8; VIC bk. 1, cc. 1-4, pp. 258-60; VMO bk. 1, par. 11; "De B. Dodone de Hascha," ed. *AASS* Mar. vol. 3, par. 1, p. 857). Other saints whose *lives* adhere to this pattern include Gerald of Cologne (Vita obitus et miracula beati Geroli martyris Coloniensis, ed. *AASS* Oct. vol. 3, c. 1, par. 2, p. 955); the later John van Ruysbroeck ("Liber secundus," c. 2, p. 284); Peter of Luxembourg ("B. Petrus de Luxemburgo," ed. *AASS* Jul. vol. 1, pp. pp. 469-70). Cf. Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages,* pp. 507-10.

28. Guillelmo de Tocco, "Vita S. Thomae Aquinatis," in *Fontes Vitae S. Thomae Aquinatis,* edited by D. Prümmer (Tolosae: Ed. Privat. 1911), cc. 1-2, pp. 66-67. Cf. Herbert, "De Miraculis," c. 34, c. 1306; Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages,* p. 510; Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society,* pp. 85-88.

imitate their creator. In addition to inspiring movements of mendicancy and voluntary poverty, the later medieval emphasis on Christ's humanity led to an increase in the attention given to his passion, particularly in relation to redemptive suffering. Though innocent, Christ had effected satisfaction for the debt incurred by human sin; men and women of the high Middle Ages sought to imitate this aspect of Christ's earthly existence through castigating their own flesh.[29] Through his sacrifice, Christ had achieved the ultimate triumph: conquering sin and death. Though human beings, by nature, are fundamentally incapable of such a victory, they could both imitate Christ and continue to fight the vestiges of Satan's power, by assuming culpable responsibility for the offences incurred by others, particularly those in purgatory and enacting the required satisfaction in their own bodies. The *vita* of Dominicus Loricatus (+1060) records that his confreres found wounds resembling those of Christ's passion and several marks of the cross on his body after his death. While Peter Damian, Dominicus' hagiographer, does not make an explicit link between Dominicus' self-torment and redemption in his *vita,* the redemptive aspects of Dominicus' suffering are implicit by this implicit association with Christ's suffering. A comparable incident is recorded in the *vita* of Dodo of Hascha.[30]

Before the twelfth century, the fate of souls who had the fortune or misfortune of entering purgatory could only be discerned from vague scriptural references, dubiously expounded upon in patristic writings.[31] Throughout the later Middle Ages, devotional texts,

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29. Cohen, "Animated Pain," pp. 61-66; Mills, "A Man," pp. 120-24.

30. Peter Damian, "Vita B. Dominici," c. 2, par. 20; "De B. Dodo," par. 8.

31. Scriptural passages which suggest the existence of purgatory include: 2 Macc. 12: 38-46, Matt. 5:25-6, 12:31-2, 1 Cor 3: 11-15, 2 Cor 12: 2-4. Patristic authors include: Augustine, "De civitate Dei," bk. 21, c. 3, in EP c. 1776, p. 582; idem, "Enchiridion, sive De fide, spe et caritate," in EP c. 1930, p. 612; idem, "Enarrationes in Psalmos," Ps. 37: 2, in EP 1467, p. 519; idem "De Genesi contra Manichaeos," bk. 2, 20, 30, in EP c. 1544, p. 534; Gregory the Great, "Dialogi" bk. 4, c. 39 in EP c. 2321, p. 728; Gregory of Nyssa, "Orationes," in EP 1061, p. 399. Cf. R. R. Atwell, "From Augustine to Gregory the Great: An Evaluation of the Emergence of the Doctrine of Purgatory," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 38 (1987): 182; Joseph Ntedika, *L'évocation de l'au-delà dans la prière pour les morts* (Louvain: Éditions Nauwelaerts, 1971), pp. 45-48.

including hagiography, began both to raise awareness of souls suffering in the afterlife and promote the idea that, through their penance, the living could relieve the purgatorial torments of the deceased.[32] Through assuming undeserved voluntary suffering, saints, like Christ, accepted responsibility for sins they did not commit. Like Christ, these men and women paid the cost of satisfaction through their own flesh, making their asceticism both purgative and empowering.[33] The suffering souls often appeared to saints of the high Middle Ages and begged the assistance of their prayers.[34] In addition, saints frequently directed their torments towards effecting satisfaction for the sins of the suffering souls. For example, Lutgard of Aywières engaged in long periods of fasting, the chaplain to the nuns of Engelthal, Friedrich Sunder (+1328), wore a hair shirt beneath his clothing and Christina of St. Trond endured all manner of exotic penances on behalf of deceased sinners.[35]

The writings of Thomas de Cantimpré attest to the prevalence of purgatorial doctrine in the high Middle Ages. Thomas had a particular interest in and a great concern for purgatorial doctrine. He wrote the *life* of Christina of St. Trond, which Robert Sweetman discusses as a virtual sermon on purgatory.[36] Moreover, his other writings show a marked concern with purgatorial doctrine. Thomas devoted a chapter of his *Bonum universale de apibus* to the ways in which the living could assist their loved ones in the afterlife.

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32. Recent discussion of purgatory was begun by Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, tr. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). Other works include, Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Les revenants: Les vivants et les morts dans la société médiévale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), and Aron Gurevich, "Popular and Scholarly Medieval Cultural Traditions," tr. Michael Rocks. *Journal of Medieval History* 9 (1983): 71-90; McNamara, "Need to Give," pp. 19-38; Sweetman, "Christine of St. Trond," pp. 411-32.

33. Cohen, "Animated Pain," pp. 61-66.

34. Ringler, *Viten*, p. 391: 26-27; VMO bk. 1, par. 27; VLA bk. 2, c. 1, par. 9.

35. VLA bk. 2, c.1, par. 2; Ringler, *Viten* p. 391: 16-29, cf. Leonard P. Hindsley, *The Mystics of Engelthal: Writings from a Medieval Monastery* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 89; VCM c. 1-3, passim

36. Sweetman, "Christine of St. Trond," pp. 411-32.

Thomas describes such practices as weeping, prayer, fasting, vigils, giving alms, paying debts and saying Mass as being efficacious towards helping the suffering souls to make satisfaction for their sins.[37] Weeping was often associated with women, yet a number of male saints were either given or desired the gift of tears.[38] As men often held property, they could more easily practice making restitution or give alms than their female contemporaries could. Saying Mass was limited to ordained men. The other devotional practices which Thomas identifies could be carried out by individuals of both genders.[39]

Female saints inflicted dramatic torments on their bodies on behalf of the suffering souls. In a dramatic example, Christina of St. Trond crawled into ovens and was hung from the gallows by her own hand.[40] However, male saints seem to have been equally concerned for the fate of the suffering souls, even if they used other means of expressing it. Clerics took advantage of their prerogative and *vitae* depict clerics such as John of Ruysbroec (+1381) and Peter of Igny (+1089) offering Mass to relieve purgatorial torments.[41] Similarly, men who ventured on crusade were offered indulgences to free souls from purgatory.[42] The *vita*

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37. BUA bk. 2, c. 53, par. 15, p. 500.

38. Peter Damian, "Vita B. Dominici," c. 1, par. 7, p. 546; VIC bk. 2, c. 22, pp. 304-05. Andrew, a thirteenth-century noble from Siena was known for his fits of weeping ("De B. Andrea Galleranis," ed. *AASS* Mar. vol. 3, par. 7, p. 53). Caesarius of Heisterbach tells of many men who sought or received the "gift of tears." Villers examples include *vita Petri*, Bruges 425 f. 97v-98r. Tears were important in the devotion of Friedrich Sunder see, Hindsley *The Mystics*, p. 91.

39. Lutgard of Aywières, Herman Joseph, Christina of St. Trond, Dominic Loricatus, Catherine of Siena, Peter Damian, Marie d'Oignies and Andrew of Corsini customarily either restricted their food intake or ate seemingly inedible substances (VHJ c. 8, par. 43, p. 704; Peter Damian, "Vita B. Dominici," bk. 1, c. 1, par. 6; "De B. Petrus Damianus S. R. E. Cardinalis Ostiensis," *AASS* Feb. t. 3, c. 2, par. 8, p. 417; Andreas, c. 2, par. 6, p. 1074). Herman Joseph, Peter of Luxembourg, Dodo of Hascha, Norbert the founder of the Premonstratensians, Dominic Loricatus and Marie d'Oignies often passed the night in vigil. (VHJ c. 3, par. 14, p. 692; "De B. Dodo," par. 3, p. 857; "Vita s. Norbertus Fundator ordinis Praemonstratensis" *AASS* Iun t. 1, c. 3, par. 4, p. 825; Peter Damian, "Vita B. Dominici," bk. 1, c. 1, par. 7; VMO bk. 1, par. 33).

40. VCM bk. 1, c. 1, par. 11, p. 652 (fire); ibid, bk. 1, c. 1, par. 13, p. 652 (gallows).

41. "Liber secundus, seu vita et miraculis fratris Johannis Ruusbroec devotii et primi prioris Viridisvallis," AB 4 (Paris: société générale de librairie catholique, 1885), c. 3. Cf. BUA bk. 2, c. 53, par. 14, pp. 499-500. VPM bk. 1, c. 2, par. 30. Cf. VIC bk. 1, c. 5, pp. 260-61.

42. Albert the Great, "Comentarii in IV sententiarum," IV, 20,18 *Opera Omnia* 29 (Paris, 1894). Quoted in Newman, *From Virile Woman*, p. 113.

of John of Cantimpré records that the prayers of John's community allowed his deceased mother's soul to pass through purgatory and to rejoice in heaven.[43]

A theory persists in modern scholarship that thirteenth-century women viewed purgatory differently from their male contemporaries. The works of scholars such as Bynum and Newman suggest that to medieval women, purgatory was the process of suffering, rather than a specific place where suffering occurred.[44] Certainly, there is some ambiguity. The thirteenth-century *vitae* of holy women contain a range of post-mortem possibilities: in the *life* of Christina of St. Trond, spatial conception of purgatory is secondary to its portrayal as suffering; the *vita* of Ida of Nivelles portrays purgatory as a geographical place.[45] It must also be kept in mind that the portrayals of purgatory in these *vitae* are as reflective of the, male, hagiographers' views as they are of the women's.

In the later medieval world view, suffering was redemptive. As such, it was an ideal way of aiding the suffering souls. In addition, physical asceticism was often portrayed as integral to a saint's personal journey towards the divine. Through physical torments, male and female saints of the high Middle Ages used the weapons of their flesh to combat worldly evil.[46] However, *vitae* do not depict self-inflicted torture as the height of sanctity. In addition to their redemptive aspects, hagiographic portrayals of physical asceticism were transcendental. The initial period of suffering commonly depicted in *vitae* functioned as a period of active service, which medieval didactic literature often portrayed as a necessary prelude to a contemplative ideal.

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43. VIC bk. 2, c. 1, p. 277.

44. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, p. 235; Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist*, pp. 108-36; cf. Jane F. Maynard, "Purgatory: Place or Process? Women's Views on Purgatory in the 14th-15th Century" *Studies in Spirituality* 12 (2002): 105-25. Maynard's findings, that women conceived purgatory as both a place and a process is as applicable to the Low Countries during the thirteenth century. Cf. VCM c. 1, par. 4-13, pp. 651-52 (place), c. 1-8, passim (suffering); VIN c. 8-10 (place).

45. VIN c. 9-10.

46. Peter Damian, "Vita B. Dominici," bk. 1, c. 1, par. 5; "De S. Norberto Archiep. Magdeburg," *AASS* Iun. 1, c. 30, par. 67, p. 840.

47. VBN bk. 1, c. 5, par. 31.

The formulaic structure of many medieval *vitae* emphasises active service—often, but not only physical asceticism—as a necessary prelude to mystical experience. Liègeois hagiographers from the high Middle Ages commonly confined their portrayals of extravagant asceticism to the first half, often the first third, of the *vitae.* In some cases, such as the *vita* of Christina of St. Trond, the saint's physical asceticism dominates the discussion of the first section, but is less emphasised at the end of the *vita*. Other saints, such as Bernard of Clairvaux or Thomas Aquinas practiced harsh acts which are mentioned at the beginning of the *vita,* but are not mentioned later in the text. Beatrice of Nazareth's hagiographer records that she spent the early part of her life inflicting various tortures upon herself. However, he is explicit in stating that her self-mutilation ceased before she had reached the age of fifteen.[47] In the second book of this *vita,* the hagiographer discusses the effects of Beatrice's penitential labour, saying that as a result of her self-torment Beatrice had "progressed in the way of virtue less than she had hoped."[48] Because of this realisation, Beatrice ceases her torments and spends her time in silent contemplation, and achieves her desired union with the divine.

As women have become increasingly associated with the body, modern scholarship has often equated it with feminine devotional practice. It is true that asceticism was prevalent in the *lives* of many holy women. Marie d'Oignies cut the skin off her feet when she walked through a sinful town and Catherine of Siena practiced long periods of fasting.[49] Through their asceticism, these women were able to keep their own bodies pure and fight urges to commit sin; however, in some instances, physical asceticism had a more dramatic effect. On one occasion, Lutgard's fasting was requested by the Blessed Virgin and

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48. VBN bk. 2, c. 3, par. 93.

49. VMO, bk. 1, c. 1, par. 12, pp. 639-40; VLA bk. 2, c. 1, par. 2, p. 243.

explicitly named as a means of fighting the Cathar heresy, which is a further instance of physical asceticism being portrayed as empowering.[50]

Despite its feminine associations in modern scholarship, penitential asceticism was also common in the *vitae* of men. Henry Suso customarily restricted his food and drink, wore an undergarment of coarse hair and leather straps which had been studded with nails against his skin; he also carried a cross, which had also been barbed with nails on his back.[51] Bernard of Clairvaux wore a hair garment next to his skin and engaged in acts of fasting that amazed his physicians.[52] That these practices were characteristic of the period rather than of gender is also evident in the number of contemporary heterodox movements, comprised of both men and women, who practiced various forms of asceticism.[53]

The primary role of the body in physical asceticism had an important didactic purpose. By the twelfth century, the Cathar heresy had become widespread in Western Europe. The Cathars were a significant presence in southern France. The threat of this heretical doctrine was also felt in the Low Countries and of particular concern to Cistercians.[54] The Liègeoise *vitae* portray ways in which the body is incorporated into their subjects' journeys towards God, thus presenting models which challenge the dualist belief in the innate evil of created matter. As is apparent, the orthodox tensions between body and soul could easily facilitate dualist heresy. The Cathar heretics took the tenuous balance between spirit and flesh to one logical extreme. To the Cathars, God was a spirit and had created a spiritual world. His divine plan was thwarted by an inherently evil demiurge, who created the

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50. VLA bk. 2, c. 1, par. 2.

51. *The Life of the Servant,* ed. and tr. Frank Tobin (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), c. 15-18, pp. 87-93. Cf. VAR bk. 1, c. 2, par. 14, p. 611. Cf. Heene, "Deliberate Self-Harm," pp. 213-33.

52. VPB bk. 1, c. 8, par. 38-39, cc. 249-250.

53. Rachel Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary* 800-1200 (New York: Colombia University Press, 2002), pp. 96-108; Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society.* pp. 154-56.

54. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy,* pp. 111-21.

physical world and entrapped the beings of pure spirit in prisons of flesh.[55] The Cathars endeavoured to conquer the flesh. Their clergy, the *perfecti/ae*, engaged in lengthy fasts, refused to eat meat or dairy products, generally abstained from sexual relations and minimised personal property.[56]

The Cathar heresy was a matter of grave concern to Liègeois religious officials. In the early thirteenth century, Cathar heretics forced Fulk, the orthodox bishop of Toulouse (+1231) from his diocese.[57] He immediately fled to Liège, where—according to Jacques de Vitry—he was attracted by the number of "modern" saints. The saints Jacques identifies in his prologue to the *vita* of Marie d'Oignies are predominantly female; however, as is made clear throughout this thesis, there is some indication that similar spirituality was common to Liègeois men. Though orthodox, the women Jacques describes represented the same poverty and purity of the *perfecti/ae*; at the same time, they lived a spirituality that was, in opposition to Cathar doctrine, inherently somatic.[58] These *mulieres sanctae* inflicted harsh asceticism on their bodies. Through their self-inflicted suffering, these women were able to progress towards holiness. Their bodies exhibited signs of their sanctity: through miraculous lactation, levitation, loss of physical control, tears and physical lights appearing about their persons, these women made known their saintly status to the world.

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55. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy,* pp. 118-25.

56. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy,* pp. 60-61, 109-11, 141.

57. Beverly Mayne Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade in Occitania, 1145-1229: Preaching in the Lord's Vineyard* (York: York Medieval Press, 2001), pp. 167-71, esp. 167 n. 140.

58. VMO Prologue, par. 2, p. 636. Cf. Vauchez, "La sainteté arme," pp. 175-85. Cf. Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade,* pp. 167 n. 140, 171-73; Ernest W. McDonnell, *Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1954), pp. 22-24. Until recently, women were thought to be attracted to heretical movements as they seen as affording them opportunities denied by the established Church. Recent work, particularly the research of Shannon McSheffrey, has shown this to be inconclusive (Shannon McSheffrey, "Women and Lollardy: A Reassessment," *Canadian Journal of History* 26 (1991): 199-223). Similarly, Walter Simons suggests that women were accused of practising Catharism when they refused the advances of lecherous clergy (Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, pp. 21-24).

As is explored in more detail in the next two chapters, physical asceticism is a central theme in the Villers corpus. The above discussion has shown that bodily suffering was connected with the development of purgatory. As well as reinforcing that the living could aid the dead, such behaviour gave witness against the potential threat of heresy. Through physical suffering, saints were able to transcend the limitations of fleshly existence and leave behind the guilt of the sins of their early lives. By accomplishing both of these things, it was possible for saints to progress to the third stage of conversion, the stage of illumination, which is discussed below.

In addition to physical asceticism, the saints often showed repentance for and purged themselves of the guilt from their misspent years through active service, often in the form of charity. The urbanisation that characterised the high Middle Ages resulted in significant social change, among which was the development of a class of urban poor. The traditional models of landholding incorporated rudimentary forms of social assistance—communal care or assistance from the local monasteries, —which was no longer possible in an urban environment.[59] Caring for the poor was a recognised social need which was fulfilled by saints. It was common in the *vitae* of those with significant property to express their intention to follow Christ by first donating their worldly possessions to the poor, in the manner of Francis of Assisi. Because of the social reality of the high Middle Ages, those saints with significant property to renounce were generally male. It was only after the hagiographers had portrayed the saints renouncing their possessions, an act often thought synonymous with separating themselves from the world, that they felt free to depict the saints' spiritual development.

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59. Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 19-29; Michel Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages: An Essay in Social History*, tr. Arthur Goldhammer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 87-88.

In addition to repentance and purgation, the stage of illumination was common in hagiography of the high Middle Ages. Following the portrayal of a period of purgation, it was common for hagiographers to portray their subjects as being linked in some way with heaven. This was typically accomplished through demonstrating the saint's miraculous powers or visionary experiences. In many cases, the miracles—providing food for the hungry or changing water to wine—were a direct reflection of events from Christ's life, as portrayed in the gospels; in other instances—obtaining knowledge by miraculous means or levitating—it was simply a reflection of the saint's extraordinary nature and liminal character. In all instances, the norms of the genre portrayed the saint as holy. The visionary abilities that were frequently portrayed at the end of saints' *lives* also justified the authority that these men and women often held in their communities.

Visionary Experiences

Throughout Christian history, it was recognised that God could, and did reveal himself in the physical world. Scripture includes accounts of Moses, Anna, Jonah, Mary and Joseph, who received instruction or messages from the divine through the physical senses. These examples were accepted and expounded upon in patristic writings. Given the prevalence of visionary experiences in early Christian writings and the later medieval tendency to return to tradition, it is far from surprising that visionary experiences should become an established, if at times controversial, *topos* in devotional writings and hagiographic texts of this period.[60]

The aforementioned biblical persons received messages from heaven in different ways—in a dream, through an angelic messenger, revelation in the mind or hearing God's

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60. Hefferman, *Sacred Biography*, p. 185; Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1981), pp. 228-30; Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls*, pp. 150-55. For the depiction of visionary experiences in sources other than hagiography see, CV, bk. 3; DM t. 2, bk. 8, pp. 1-101; Herbert of Clairvaux, *De Miraculis*, PL 185 cc. 1273-1384.

voice. The same is true of hagiography: saints received messages from the divine in a variety of ways. In his *Literal Commentary on Genesis* Augustine described three types of visions: the corporeal vision, which is perceived through the physical senses; the spiritual vision, which is akin to an emotional understanding; and the intellectual vision, which brings clearer understanding to the mind. Despite an ongoing debate about the discernment of "true," visions—that is, those that were divine in origin—the *possibility* of divine revelation was almost universally recognised and Augustine's typology was commonly accepted throughout the Middle Ages.[61]

In addition to phenomenological differences between varieties of visionary experiences, there is also some linguistic ambiguity. In the Liègeoise *vitae* and many contemporary texts, a vision is either described by saying that the saint saw a vision (active voice of *video -ere*) or that a vision was seen by the saint (passive of the same). The passive voice of *video* can also be translated "it seemed." When it was used in this manner, it refers to understanding gained through means that is not exclusively visual.[62] Because of the variation in experiences that hagiography refers to as "visions," this thesis refers to such encounters as "visionary experiences."

Visions in Liègeoise *vitae*—the *lives* of both men and women—from the high Middle Ages generally performed three functions: instigating new religious behaviour; confirming that controversial religious behaviour was pleasing to God; or revealing hidden knowledge. All three types confirm that a visionary had gained favour with heaven. Dodo of Hascha began a new religious vocation as the result of a vision.[63] A vision confirmed the orthodoxy of Lutgard of Aywières' controversial fasting. Christina

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61. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* in *Introduction to the Philosophy of Saint Augustine* ed. John A. Mourant (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1964), pp. 174-77. Cf. Jean-Claude Schmitt, "La culture de l'imago" *Annales: Economics, Histoires, Sciences Sociales* 1 (1996): 3-36.

62. *Lewis and Short*, s. v. *video –ere*, p. 1988 col. C, p. 1989, col. A-B.

63. "De B. Dodo," par. 4.

of St. Trond and Catherine of Siena were often called upon to bring advice that they obtained through revelation to political and religious leaders. The various functions fulfilled by visionary experiences in the Liègeoise *vitae* are discussed in the third and fourth chapters of this thesis.

Unlike conversion, which was fundamentally a personal change, visionary experience had public implications. As medieval society recognised visions as a sign of divine favour, becoming recognised as a channel for the divine affected a saint's status within his or her community.64 For words to carry value, it is necessary that they be recognised as authoritative. Such authority, particularly in the later Middle Ages was often a result of education or political status. In vitae, saints are generally portrayed as authoritative figures within their communities. If there is no obvious reason—such as a respectable educational or social background—it was particularly important for the hagiographer to use other methods of establishing his subject's revered status. This is often done through recording visionary experiences granted to a saint, which the visionary immediately tries to establish as genuine. The visionary literature from the high Middle Ages often reflects the biblical principle of the Lord using the weak to confound the strong. Tales of visionary political leaders exist, but are less common than tales of visionaries who held little secular power, who were often but not exclusively women.[65] Modern scholars often note the connection between female saints and visionary authority. Indeed, many instances of this can be found in the vitae mulierum: Christina became an advisor to Louis of Looz and

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64. Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, p. 151; Heene, "Deliberate Self-Harm," pp. 213-33; Clarissa Atkinson, "Authority, Virtue and Vocation: The Implications of Gender in Two Twelfth-Century English Lives" in *Religion, Text, and Society in Medieval Spain and Northern Europe: Essays in Honor of J. N. Hillgarth*, ed. Thomas E. Burman et al., (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies, 2002), pp. 169-82; Suydam, "Beguine Textuality," pp. 169-210; Carolyn Muessig, "Prophecy and Song: Teaching and Preaching by Medieval Women," in *Women Preachers and Prophets*, pp. 146-58.

65. Lifshitz, "Beyond Positivism and Genre," pp. 95-113.

Marie, when in rapture, became Jacques' teacher.66 However, the association of visionary authority with the feminine is premature. As is discussed in Chapter Three, the same connection between visions and authority appears in the vitae of men who have no other means of obtaining authority in their community.

Despite providing justification for a saint's authoritative role in his or her community, it is important to recognise that visionary authority, as presented in hagiographic accounts, did not present any significant challenge to the ecclesiastical hierarchy. For the words of a visionary to gain any recognition, it was important that the content of his or her visions be in keeping with Church doctrine and, at least initially, validated by a Church official. As is discussed later in this thesis, visions in monastic *vitae* often reflect the ideals of the monastic community. As *vitae* were generally written by educated churchmen, a hagiographic account of a visionary experience provided it with immediate sanction. In other cases, the *vita* relates or other evidence corroborates the fact that the visionary saint directly seeks guidance regarding his or her visions. An example of this is the correspondence of Hildegard von Bingen (+ 1179) and Bernard of Clairvaux. When Hildegard began to experience divine revelations, she immediately wrote to Bernard. Her earlier letters sought his interpretation of her visions; it was only later, after Bernard repeatedly sanctioned her visionary experiences, that she began to record the content of her visions in a way that indicated that she recognised them as divine and expected others to act accordingly.[67] Similar relationships are evident in the Liègeoise *vitae*, particularly between

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66. VCM c. 4, par. 41, p. 657; VMO bk. 2, c. 5, par. 48, p. 649. Cf. Petroff, "Introduction," p. 6; Bynum; "... And Woman His Humanity," p. 259; Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 117-19, 227-37; Brenda Bolton, "Mulieres Sanctae," in *Women in Medieval Society* ed. Susan Mosher Stuard (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), pp. 141-58.

67. Gillian T. W. Ahlgren, "Visions and Rhetorical Suffering in the Letters of Hildegard of Bingen," in *Dear Sister*, ed. Karen Cherewatuk and Ulrike Wiethaus (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 47-49. Cf. Blamires, *The Case for Women*, pp. 194-95; Muessig, "Prophecy and Song," p. 148.

female saints and their confessors. As is typical of hagiography of the high Middle Ages, the Liègeois saints do not claim personal authority for the content of their visions. Instead, these holy men and women simply claim to be a mouthpiece for the divine.

Even visionary experiences or ecstasies were often made known through the saints' physical bodies. It was not uncommon for hagiographers to show their subjects' communication with the divine through their bodies. Dominic Loricatus flogged himself while kneeling and prayed with his arms extended;[68] Christina of St. Trond appeared to lose control of her limbs in prayer; a bright light appeared near Elezear of Sabran while he was praying; Elizabeth of Schonau (+1164) was known to perform an almost mime-version of Christ's passion. For narrative purposes, the inclusion of tales that portray the saints transported outside ordinary experience, that is *ex stasis,* both shows that the saints were experiencing something outside ordinary experience and gives a concrete reason why their community would have immediately recognised it as such.

Ecstatic physical behaviours were extraordinary, and it is often difficult to discern the difference between tales of divine visionary or mystical rapture and demonic possession. Indeed, medieval theologians recognised that a mind open to visionary experiences was, at the same time, vulnerable to demonic deceptions.[69] Hagiographers, understandably, wished to emphasise that their subjects were recipients of divine grace, rather than victims of the demonic.[70] This was primarily accomplished through stressing the truth of the content of visions, their compatibility with Church teachings or their connection with the sacraments.

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68. Peter Damian, "Vita B. Dominici," c. 1, par. 6, 11.

69. Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices* (Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 1999), p. 18. Cf. Newman, *Possessed by the Spirit,* pp. 733-70.

70. Pierre Boglioni has studied this subject extensively, and has not come across a single example where a formal charge of demonic possession is wielded against a saint (Pierre Boglioni, "Saints and Miraculous Learning of Latin. Types and Meanings of a Hagiographic Theme." Conference Paper Presented at, *Teaching, Learning, and Using Latin in the Middle Ages*. University of Toronto. March 18, 2000).

As well as ecclesiastical recognition, an important criterion for the validity and divine origins of visions was that they were true. Satan, as the Father of Lies, was thought incapable of any revelations that were not deceptive and it was inconceivable that truthful revelations could have anything other than divine origins. The *vitae* of saints from throughout Europe in the high Middle Ages record instances in which visionaries reveal knowledge of events that they could only have obtained through miraculous means. Lutgard of Aywières was called upon to identify a body, which she immediately reveals is the deceased virgin Osanna, Andrew Gallerani (+1251) was warned of his own death, the German Premonstratensian Herman Joseph (+1241) identified the contents of a reliquary as the remains of St. Gertrude, and Marie d'Oignies knew when the city of Liège had been destroyed.[71] By including instances that are recognised as objectively truthful, the hagiographers give added credence to instances in which the saint gives visionary testimony in support of matters which are not immediately verifiable. Doctrinal visions cannot be "proven," but are certainly gain credibility when they are portrayed as part of a series of visions which are objectively true.

Visionary experiences had a public dimension, which enhanced their connection to authority. It is essential to realise that although visionary authority was accepted, it was carefully questioned. Instead of being universally applicable, it was often used to augment the portrayal of a thing, doctrine or person already recognised as holy. It is important to understand the nature of this authority and the uses of visionary experiences when analysing visionary experiences in the Liègeoise *vitae*.

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71. VLA bk. 2, par. 34; "De B. Andrea Galleranis," par. 12; VHJ c. 5, par. 30, p. 698; VMO bk. 2, par. 57. This incident in also referred to in the prologue to this *vita*. Liège was destroyed by the soldiers of Henry I between the third and seventh of May, 1212. See, Humbert Ligny, *L'Occident Médiéval: La Belgique et L'Europe* (Bruxelles: Éditions Universitaires, 1947), pp. 186-87.

In addition to its influence on hagiographic portrayals of somatic devotion, the Cathar heresy necessitated a new emphasis on Christ's humanity. To facilitate this, theologians of the later Middle Ages emphasised the Virgin's role as Christ's human mother.[72] In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Marian devotion gained an unprecedented popularity in Western Europe: Marian doctrines were frequently debated and Marian *exempla* were often repeated in sermons and hagiography.[73] At this time, the Virgin was frequently depicted in art and iconography, which accentuated her humanity more than the art of the earlier Middle Ages had done.[74] Moreover, as is evident in the Liègeoise *vitae* the Blessed Virgin, patroness of the Cistercian Order, was invoked as the final refuge of sinners.

The faithful of the high Middle Ages honoured and loved Mary, at least officially, for her role in the life of her Son, with whom she was regarded as an invaluable intercessor.[75] Many of the newly-developing expressions of Marian devotion were focused explicitly on her maternal role. In what seems a precursor to the modern rosary, Marian

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72. Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion*, pp. 60-61; Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 45-77; Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 63-69, 251-59.

73. VAR bk. 2, c. 2, par. 10-16 pp. 618-20; VAB c. 8-11, pp. 19-22; idem c. 13-14, pp. 24-26; VGA bk. 1, c. 3, par. 26, 39-40; VGP c. 18, p. 267; VGS c. 2, par. 8-10, pp. 535-36.

74. Émile Mâle, *Religious Art: From the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 121-22; Ilene Forsyth, *The Throne of Wisdom: Wood Sculptures of the Madonna in Romanesque France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 1-7, especially page 1, n. 1. René Laurentin, *Vierges Romanes: Les Vierges Assises* (Paris: Zodiaque, 1988), pp. 106-09.

75. The basis for Mary's intercessory role is the wedding at Cana, where she interceded with her Son in order that he might help the newly married couple who had run out of wine (John 2:1-11). Cf. Jean Leclercq, "The Queen Mother in the Xth-XIIIth Centuries" *Word and Spirit* 10 (1988): 57-77; Guy Philippart, "Le récit miraculaire marial dans l'Occident médiéval," in *Marie: Le culte de la Vierge dans la société médiévale*, ed. Dominique Iogna-Prat et al. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1996), pp. 577-81; H. Barré, "Les premières prières mariales de l'Occident," *Marianum* 21 (1959): 128-73; François-Jérôme Beausart, "Figures feminines dans la littérature mariale (XIIe-XIIIe siècles)" *Le Moyen Âge* 12 (1998): 435, 435 n. 3, 452. Caesarius' *Dialogus miraculorum* includes numerous examples of the Virgin's intercessory power. One such story speaks of a monk who is beset by a troubling temptation, which he has asked the Lord to take away on numerous occasions. As his prayers had seemed ineffective, the monk made clear that if the temptation were not lifted from him he would appeal to the Blessed Virgin. Caesarius tells us that upon hearing this the Lord, out of love for the simplicity of the aforementioned monk rather that filial duty, answered his prayer (DM t. 1, bk. 6, c. 30, p. 442).

prayers encouraged the supplicant to meditate on the sorrows that the Virgin experienced at Christ's passion and death.[76] The events which were thought of as the sorrows, heavenly and earthly joys of the Virgin, were often illustrated in breviaries from the thirteenth century onwards.[77] At the same time, the psalter, or "Little Office" of the Blessed Virgin, another possible antecedent to the modern rosary, became popular, and was practiced by the illiterate monks and lay brothers, including Arnulfus and Gobertus of Aspermont, in Villers.[78]

The Marian veneration that was characteristic of the high Middle Ages should not be seen as institutionalised Mariolatry.[79] It is true that the Blessed Virgin held an illustrious role both in liturgy and iconography. She was often included medieval representations of the Triune God, suggesting a medieval perception of a quaternary rather than a trinity. Twelfth- and thirteenth-century Marian prayers sometimes seem simply to substitute the name of the Virgin for that of her Son.[80] However, writers of *vitae*, theological treatises and devotional texts emphasise that honouring the Virgin was simply another way of honouring her Son.[81]

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76. Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion*, pp. 215-43; Anne Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), pp. 10-14; Catherine Margaret Oakes, "An Iconographic Study of the Virgin as Intercessor, Mediator and Purveyor of Mercy in Western Understanding from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth century" (University of Bristol, Doctoral Dissertation, 1997), pp. 168-70. Cf. VAR bk. 2, c. 1 par. 14, p. 619.

77. Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, p. 16.

78. VGA bk. 2, c. 2, par. 60, p. 389; Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, p. 114, 114 n. 5. Cf. Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, p. 15; Selwood, *Knights of the Cloister*, pp. 203-04.

79. For this view see, Penny S. Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 43-68.

80. The peculiar *Te matrem laudamus*, states explicitly: "we praise the name of the most high (*nomen altissimi*), he who made you the most exalted woman (*altissimam*)" (Paul Sheridan, *Les inscriptions sur ardoise de l'abbaye de Villers: Extrait de Annales de la Société d'Archéologie de Bruxelles*, Mémoirs, Rapports et Documents (Brussels: Archives Général du Royaume et Archives de l'état dans les Provinces, 1999). Translation my own. Cf. Gabriela Signori, "The Miracle Kitchen and its Ingredients: A Methodological and Critical Approach to Marian Shrine Wonders (10th to 13th century)," *Hagiographica* 3 (1996): 296-97).

81. VHJ passim; Petro Andrea de Castaneis, "De S. Andrea Corsino, Episcopo Faesulano," *AASS* Jan. vol. 2. c. 1, par. 9, p. 1066.

Theologians, particularly Thomas Aquinas, repeatedly emphasised that Mary should be honoured and not worshipped. It was proper for humans to accord worship (*latria*) to God alone. Mary, though a being greater than all but God, was still merely human. Her unique status as the Mother of God entitled her to more than the veneration (*doulia*) given to the saints. The Angelic Doctor circumvented this problem by claiming that the Virgin was entitled to exalted veneration, or *hyperdoulia.* Church doctrine held that Mary was exalted primarily because of her submission to God's will. Mary was at once the greatest and most humble of creatures, and both preachers and confessors exhorted the faithful to emulate these qualities.[82] Rather than being an obscure theological tenet, the idea of exaltation through submissiveness is prevalent in devotional texts and theological tractates from the high Middle Ages. Hagiography, particularly though not exclusively, the *vitae mulierum*, emphasised the humility and submission that was innate to the saints and was the eventual cause of their achieving greatness.[83] Theologians of the high Middle Ages did not officially consider Marian veneration to be problematic as it did not in any way detract from the worship accorded to Christ. Although specific Marian doctrines were often the subject of heated debate, as is reflected in Liègeoise hagiography, there was general agreement that the Blessed Virgin should be honoured as having a central role in salvific theology.[84]

The Liègeoise *vitae* attach considerable importance to Mary's salvific role as the final refuge of sinners. The Villers *vitae*, as well as contemporary texts in Western Europe, reflect the prominence that Mary's task of guarding her wayward children took on in

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82. Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion,* pp. 225-28.

83. VAR bk. 1, c.1, par. 8, p. 610; ibid bk. 1, c.1, par. 10, p. 610; VLA bk. 2, c. 1, par. 9, p. 245. Cf. Catherine Mooney, "*Imitatio Christi* or *Imitatio Mariae*? Clare of Assisi and her Interpreters," in *Gendered Voices,* pp. 58-71.

84. On it being fitting to honour Mary see, ST. 1.6. 4; 2-2.103. 3. On various Marian doctrines, including her Perpetual Virginity and Immaculate Conception see, ST 3. 27-30.

the high Middle Ages.[85] Despite her position of power, Mary was seen as merciful and was perceived as never having forgotten her promise to be mother to the human race. Although depictions of Mary as the Mother of Mercy and Queen of Heaven gained a new prominence in the high Middle Ages, they had been recognised since the early Church. Given the later medieval understanding of justice it is not surprising that humanity began to feel the need for a powerful intercessor.[86] Nor is it surprising that this role should fall to the Virgin: a refuge of sinners from as early as the fourth century and the Mother of Mercy.[87] Although her role as both virgin and mother, and widely accepted (if not yet dogmatic) freedom from sin, made her difficult to emulate, the Virgin, as both mercy personified and a powerful intercessor with her Son, offered assurance of Christ's clemency to any who felt beyond redemption.[88]

Collections of *exempla* often related the Virgin's aid to those who turned to her in seemingly hopeless situations: a penitent pregnant abbess;[89] Beatrice, the wayward sacristan;[90] a thief who had begged the Virgin not to allow him to die in a state of mortal sin;[91] and Theophilius, a deacon who had sold his soul to Satan.[92] Similarly, in the Liègeoise *vitae,* predominantly, as is described in the next chapter, the *vitae* of the Villers brothers, the Blessed Virgin is portrayed as assisting those wavering in faith and revealing information that the saints use to assist in saving the souls of sinners. In each instance, the Virgin's intervention prevented the sinner from utter ruin: it gave him or her an opportunity to repent, and to receive sacramental absolution.

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85. On one occasion, the Blessed Virgin was instrumental in relieving Herman Joseph's dental woes (VHJ c. 4, par. 25, p. 696).

86. Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion*, pp. 205-43.

87. Oakes, "An Iconographic Study," pp. 30-31.

88. Cf. Oakes, "An Iconographic Study," pp. 26-58.

89. Frederic C. Tubach, *Index exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales*, FF Communications 204. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia Akademia Scientiarum Fennica, 1969), 2, p. 9.

90. DM t. 1, bk. 7, c. 34, pp. 502-03. Cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, 536, p. 46.

Rather than being unique to Liègeoise hagiography, tales which emphasised Mary's mercy were part of a wider devotional context. Mary's mercy was bestowed upon clergy and the laity; on the virtuous who had erred and on resolute sinners.[91] However, her favour was not entirely random. A close examination of Marian *miracula* reveals that the Virgin's mercy was invariably given to those who had shown filial devotion to her: the aforementioned thief had prayed the *Ave* while committing crimes and Beatrice had dedicated herself to the Virgin's service. Another poignant example is found in the *vita* of Herman Joseph, who had been devoted to the Virgin from his childhood. Herman grew up in an impoverished household. Because of his family finances, Herman was unable to buy shoes. When the Virgin saw him walking barefoot to a church dedicated in her honour, she approached the child and told him where he might find money for shoes.[94]

Protecting her children is in keeping with the scriptural portrayal of Mary. While dying on the cross, Christ had given Mary as mother to the human race, signified in John. As well as asking that Mary care for her human children, Christ had demanded that they honour her. In a peculiar interpretation of reciprocal justice, Mary gave her motherly protection to those who honoured her as her Son had requested. Collections associated

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91. This story occurs frequently in manuscripts from the twelfth through the fifteenth century (Johannes Herolt, *Miracles of the Blessed Virgin* Trans. C.C.S. Bland (London: George Routledge, 1928), pp. 22-23, and 135 n. 5). Cf. DM t. 1, bk. 7, c. 58, pp. 543-45; Tubach, *Index exemplorum* 313, 4781.

92. DM t. 1, bk. 7, c. 10, p. 467. Peter Abelard's Sermon on the Assumption of the Virgin refers to the Theophilius legend (Peter Abelard, "Sermo 26 in Assumptione beatae Mariae" PL 178, c. 545). Cf. Beausart, "Figures féminines," p. 425; Tubach, *Index exemplorum* 3572, p. 277; BUA bk. 2, c. 29, par. 6-21, pp. 276-303; Signori, "The Miracle Kitchen," pp. 277-89.

93. Such collections of *exempla* include the works of Guibert of Nogent, Walter of Cluny, Caesarius of Heisterbach, and Vincent of Beauvais (Walter of Cluny, "*De Miraculis Beatae Virginis Mariae*" PL 173, cc. 1379-1386; Guibert of Nogent, "*De Laude Sancte Mariae*" PL 156, cc. 537-78; DM t. 1, bk. 7, pp. 453-546, passim. For a discussion of Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Historiale* see, H. Barré, "L'image du Mariale Magnum" *Ephemerides Mariologiae* 16 (1966): 265-67). For Marian *exempla* see, Joan Young Gregg, "The Exempla of Jacob's Well: A Study in the Transmission of Medieval Sermon Stories" *Traditio* 33 (1977): 359-80, esp. pp. 359-61. Also, A. Poncelet has compiled an index of Marian miracle stories in edited collections (A. Poncelet, "Index Miraculorum Beatae Virginis Mariae quae saec. VI-XV latine conscripta sunt" *AB* 21 (1902): 241-360).

94. VHJ c. 1, par. 7, p. 689.

with monastic houses often portrayed the Virgin showing approval to those who fulfilled their monastic duties: assiduous observance of the Divine Office, or diligence in manual labour.[95]

The Mariology that is prevalent in the Villers *vitae* should be seen as characteristic of the Cistercian Order: the Cistercian fathers had decreed that every Cistercian house be dedicated to the Mother of God and placed under her protection and the Cistercian Chapter General was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin.[96] The Virgin was also honoured in Cistercian liturgy. For example, from the twelfth century, the Blessed Virgin was honoured in the liturgy of the Hours and in the early thirteenth century, the *Salve Regina* was sung at the end of the chapter.[97] At the same time, Cistercian legislators decreed that both monks and lay brothers celebrate the feasts of Mary's Nativity, Purification and Assumption, and articles from the *Ecclesiasticorum officiorum* indicate that this mandate was observed.[98] In Cistercian art, the icon of the Blessed Virgin sheltering members of the order under her cloak was common.[99] In addition to documents that pertain to the entire Cistercian Order, devotion to the Blessed Virgin is pervasive in the writings of individual Cistercian monks:

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95. DM t. 1, bk. 7, c. 12, pp. 469-70; ibid, t.1, bk. 7, c. 13, pp. 470-71; ibid, t.1, bk. 7, c. 18, p. 480; ibid t.1, bk. 7, c. 19, pp. 480-81; ibid t.1, bk. 7, c. 25, p. 493; ibid t.1, bk. 7, c. 50, pp. 535-36. Cf. Chrysogonus Waddell, "La Vierge Marie dans la Liturgie Cistercienne au XIIe siècle" *Bulletin de la Société Française d'Études Mariales* 54 (1998): 123-136.

96. Statuta 1134, bk. 1, c. 18, p. 17.

97. Statuta 1175, bk. 1, c. 3, p. 82. Cf. Statuta 1174, bk. 1, c. 2, pp. 81-82; Statuta 1185, bk. 1, c. 28, pp. 101-02; Statuta 1218, bk. 1, c. 1, p. 485.

98. Statuta 1134, bk. 1, c. 25, pp. 18-19; Statuta 1157, bk. 1, c. 18, p. 61; EO 11, c. 7, p. 84; 17, c. 8, p. 96; 34, c. 2, p. 124; 43, c. 2, p. 136; 44 c. 2, p. 136; 46, c. 6, p. 138; 47, c. 1, p. 142, c. 17, p. 144; 49, 60, c. 8, p. 186; 65, c. 2, p. 190; 110, c. 4, p. 312. Cf. "Calandrier des célébrations à date fixe mentionnées dans les E. O.," in *Les Ecclesiastica Officia Cisterciensis du XIIème Siècle*, ed. Danièle Choisselet and Placide Vernet (Reiningue, 1989), pp. 397-99; Waddell, "La Vierge Marie dans la Liturgie," p. 125.

99. DM t. 1, bk. 7, c. 64, p. 546; Cf. Tubach, *Index exeplorum* 1102, pp. 88-89. For further discussion of this image of the Virgin see, Oakes, "An Iconographic Study," pp. 138-51.

Alan of Lille, Guerric of Igny and Bernard of Clairvaux all express love of the Virgin and emphasise her mercy.[100]

Manuscript evidence suggests that devotion to the Blessed Virgin was also a feature of Villers spirituality. Psalters from Villers contain Marian offices, manuscripts written at Villers, or contained in the 1309 catalogue of the Villers library, include versions of the *Salve Regina* and copies of Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on the Assumption.[101]

Perhaps the most curious text which emphasises that Marian veneration was common at Villers is a slate engraving from the late thirteenth century which was found in the ruins of the monastery. This slate records a text recognisable as following the *Te Deum*, but written in language that describes the Blessed Virgin.[102] The same slate bears a legend, which describes the origin of this antiphon: two monks, unequal in ability, were competing to write a poem in praise of the Blessed Virgin. Seeing this, Mary appeared first to one, and then the other, revealing verses that she thought fitting for her praise. When each had finished "his" poem, the Blessed Virgin appeared to both and ordered them to combine their verses, saying that she would only be pleased by a combination of the two texts. The monks did as she requested and ceased to be competitive in their affections.[103]

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100. Francesca Rita Alimonti, "La *Mater Misericordia* nella tradizione cisterciense" *Marianum* 54 (1992): 209-17. Cf. José Maria Canal, *Salve Regina Misericordiae* (Rome: Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 1963), pp. 53-59; Marie-Imelda Huille and Joël Regnard, "Introduction" to Bernard de Clairvaux, *À la louange de la Vierge Mère*. Sources Chrétiennes no. 390 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1993), pp. 66-96.

101. B. R. 20006-17 ff. 110v-111r (*Salve Regina*); B. R. 200026-27 f. 107 (Life of the Virgin); B. R. 4877-86 ff. 84v-88v (Miracles of the Virgin); B. R. 20020-25 ff. 41r-56r. For contents of the 1309 catalogue and the manuscripts produced by the *Scriptorium* at Villers see, Falmagne, *Un texte en contexte*, pp. 413-539. Bernard of Clairvaux claimed that his sermons in praise of the Virgin were written as an expression of devotion, rather than to meet a pastoral need.

102. B. R. II 1592. This was discovered by archaeologists working in the ruins of Villers in 1894. The text of this manuscript is edited, Paul Sheridan, "Les inscriptions sur ardoise de l'abbaye de Villers," *Annales de la Société d'archéologie de Bruxelles* 10 (1896): 203-15, 404-51. I am grateful to Ann Kelders to her assistance with this manuscript.

103. Although there are at least four other copies of the *Te Deum* of the Virgin, none of these texts includes the legend of its authorship. The other manuscript copies of this prayer predominantly date from the Low Countries, during the thirteenth through the fifteenth century. The text is twelfth century, and attributed to Peter Comestor. Cf. Moreau, *L'abbaye*, pp. LXIX-LXX.

As well as Mary's mercy, the Villers *vitae* were concerned with emphasising the truth of the Assumption doctrine. From the earliest days of Christianity, the Mother of God had been recognised as being blessed among women. At least as early as patristic times there has been a tradition that one of the blessings bestowed upon the Blessed Virgin was that both her body and soul were present in heaven.[104] From the seventh century onwards, the Virgin's Dormition was celebrated in the Eastern Church on 15 August, which, by the ninth century was observed as the feast of the Assumption in the Western Church.[105] Most early writings that deal with the Assumption are in Greek, but appear in Latin translation throughout Europe in the twelfth century. At the same time, observation of the feast of the Assumption became common: this feast was now included in the liturgical calendar; evidence from breviaries illustrates that it was commonly observed by those dedicated to the religious life; and evidence from the Chapter General shows that it was, at least ideally, celebrated in houses belonging to the Cistercian Order.[106]

Although the feast of the Assumption was commonly observed in the high Middle Ages, Mary's corporeal presence in heaven was still, in some circles, an uncertainty.[107] Those who supported the doctrine of the Assumption argued that there was no tangible

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104. Epiphanius (c. 315-403), "Panarion sive adversus Haereses," EM, pp. 373-77; Modestus of Jerusalem (+634), "Encomium in Dormitionem SS. Deiparae," EM, pp. 1255-1279; John the Damascene (+ c. 749), "Homiliae 1-3 in Dormitionem B. V. Mariae," EM, pp. 1647-1708; Gregory of Tours, *Libri Miraculorum*, EP pp. 757-58, 2290b-c. It is important to keep in mind that in each example given above, the author does not doubt that the Blessed Virgin is corporeally present in heaven (Donna Spivey Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), pp.102-10; Antoine Wenger, *L'Assomption de la T. S. Vierge dans la tradition byzantine du VIe au Xe Siècle* (Paris: Institut Française d'Études byzantines, 1955), pp. 111-39).

105. Evidence of the early celebration of the Assumption includes fragmentary liturgical books, such as the sixth or seventh century "Missale Gothicum seu Gothico-Gallicum" EP p. 721, 2290a.

106. Statuta, 1157, bk. 1, c. 17, p. 61; Statuta 1184, bk. 1, c. 9, p. 96. In the statutes, the Assumption is generally recorded with the other Marian feasts. Repeated repetition in the chapter suggests that these may not have always been observed in practice, but the ideal held by the majority of Cistercian abbots remained unchanged. Cf. UC c. 3, pp. 61-62; unnumbered chapter concerning communion, pp. 74-75.

107. The doctrine of the Assumption was not made dogma until 1950 when Pius XII promulgated the Virgin's corporeal presence in Heaven with his bull *Munificentissimus Deus* (Pius XII, "Munificentissimus Deus" *Acta Apostolicae Sedes* 42 (1950): 753-73).

evidence to contradict Mary's physical presence in paradise: there was no recognised tomb of the Virgin;[108] the relics from her body were never found;[109] there is remarkably little scriptural mention of the Virgin after the passion of her Son; and no scriptural reference to her death.[110] Moreover, because Mary and Jesus shared one flesh, it was fitting that she be taken corporeally into the divine kingdom to which he had already ascended.[111] That it was fitting that the Virgin be with her Son in the heavenly kingdom was unchallenged; however, the certainty of her *corporeal* presence was questioned.[112] Despite its characteristic Marian devotion the Cistercian Order appears to have approached the doctrine of the Assumption with some hesitation. Although both Cistercian monks and lay brothers celebrated 15 August, the readings of the day expressed some doubt about the certainty of the Assumption. In Villers, the lessons that accompanied the Liturgy of the Hours on that day which were drawn from the controversial *Cogitis me,* acknowledged

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108. The Eastern Church held that the Virgin died and was buried at Gethsemane. It was from this tomb that it was believed that Jesus raised her into paradise. (Vat. Gr. 1982. Quoted in Wenger, *L'Assomption*, p. 239).

109. Some considered the extant Marian relics, her robe and her girdle, to be problematic with regards to her Assumption (Wenger, *L'Assomption*, pp. 112-23).

110. In itself this is not surprising as the Blessed Virgin is referred to infrequently in scripture (Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Mary: Glimpses of the Mother of Jesus* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995).

111. Pseudo-Augustine, "De Assumptione Beatae Mariae Virginis" PL 40, c. 7, cc. 1147-1148.

112. When the doctrine of the Assumption was promulgated, Catholic theologians pointed out that Mary's corporeal presence in paradise had been accepted without a serious challenge since at least the thirteenth century. Bernard of Clairvaux was a well-known, though not outspoken, supporter of the Assumption (Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermones 1-4 in Assumptione" PL 183, cc. 415-430; Thomas Aquinas points out that there is nothing in the scriptures that either confirms or denies the Virgin's corporeal presence in paradise, but asserts, that as Augustine (now Pseudo-Augustine) argues, it is fitting that she be assumed into paradise (ST 3.27.1; idem 3.83.5.8) Cf. Albert the Great, "Sermo 31. In Eodem Festis Assumptionis B. Mariae Virg.," *Sermones* ed. Augustus Borgnet. Opera Omnia vol. 13 (Paris: Ludovicum Vives, 1891), pp.538-41; Bonaventure, *De Assumptione B. Mariae Virginis*, Sermones 1-6, in *Sermones* Vol. 9, ed. David Fleming, S. Bonaventura Opera Omnia (Claras Aquas: Collegi S. Bonaventura, 1991), pp. 687-706, esp. Sermo 2, pp. 691-92; Peter Abelard, "Sermo 26" PL 178, cc. 539b-546b.

that it was fitting that Mary be in heaven: "*utrum assumpta fuerit simul cum corpore, an abierit relicto corpore.*"[113]

Paschasius Radbertus (+ c.860) the abbot of Corbie, wrote the *Cogitis me* to be read on the feast of the Assumption.[114] In this text, Paschasius praises the many virtues of the ever-Virgin Mother of God, and exhorts his audience to emulate her.[115] He spoke of the Virgin's unwavering faith, and acknowledged that it was fitting that she be with her Son in paradise; however, he made the above statement—*utrum assumpta fuerit*...—which cast doubt as to the corporeal nature of her heavenly presence.

As the Assumption was not yet held as dogma, Paschasius' sentiments regarding the Virgin's presence in heaven were not regarded as heretical. It is even doubtful that they would have had any effect on the acceptance of the doctrine, if he had circulated them under his own name. Paschasius was, almost certainly, aware of this, and wrote the *Cogitis me* as a letter from Jerome to the widow Paula and her virgin daughter Eustochium. "Jerome's" authorship gave the *Cogitis me* the weight of patristic authority, creating the appearance of patristic doubt over the certainty of the Virgin's corporeal presence in paradise.[116] The patristic origins of the *Cogitis me* ensured that it had tremendous influence in impeding the general acceptance of the doctrine of the Assumption.[117]

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113. "Whether she had been assumed together with [her] body, or after she had left her body" (Paschasius, "Epistola," pp. 112-13). Cf. E. Wellens, "L'ordre de Cîteaux et l'Assomption," *Collectanea Ordinis Cisterciensis* 13 (1951): 31. For a discussion of the lessons that accompanied the Liturgy of the Hours see, Pius Parsch, *The Breviary Explained*, trans. W. Nayden and C. Hoegerl (St. Louis: 1952), p. 97.

114. Paschasius Radbertus, *Epistola Beati Hieronymi ad Paulam et Eustochium de Assumptione Sanctae Mariae Virginis*, ed. E. Ann Matter and Albert Ripberger. Corpus Christianorum 56 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), pp. 109-162. For a discussion of Paschasius' life see "Introduction," in idem, pp. 9-10.

115. Paschasius, "Epistola," pp. 127-28, 134, 157-58.

116. For a discussion of Paschasius as author see, D. G. M[orin], "Notes Liturgiques sur l'Assomption," *Revue bénedictine* 5 (1888): 342-51.

117. René Laurentin, *Court Traité sur la Vierge Marie*, 5th edition (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1967), p. 68. Patristic authority was valued in the Cistercian Order, see, Wellens, "Cîteaux et l'Assomption," pp. 33-36.

As the Cistercian Order attached great importance to tradition, the existence of *Cogitis me* presented some difficulty. An examination of Cistercian breviaries shows that all twelve lessons that accompanied the Liturgy of the Hours on 15 August were drawn from this text.[118] Despite its pervasiveness, it appears that the liturgical use of the *Cogitis me* caused some consternation. Caesarius' *Dialogue on Miracles* speaks of Bertram, a monk who was greatly disturbed by hearing "Jerome's" doubts about the Assumption doctrine; in the *vita Abundi,* Goswin of Bossut tells us that Abundus also experienced distress after hearing the *Cogitis me*; and in the *De bonum universale apibus*, Thomas de Cantimpré tells a tale of a similar reaction from a non-Cistercian.[119] The disapproval for the liturgical use of the *Cogitis me* appears to have been sufficiently widespread to have had some effect, from the thirteenth century onwards Cistercian breviaries began to exclude the lesson for the Hour of Matins, which had previously attested to "Jerome's" scepticism.[120]

The twelfth-century appearance of a sermon purported to be written by Augustine, which gave unequivocal support to the doctrine of the Assumption, seems to have remedied the dismay aroused by the *Cogitis me*. "Augustine" alludes to the lack of physical evidence for the Blessed Virgin being present on earth. Moreover, he argues that it was fitting both that the Lord should preserve his mother from death and decay and that she should

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118. Wellens, "Cîteaux et l'Assomption," pp. 31-32.

119. DM t.1, bk. 7, c. 36, pp. 505-06; VAB 13, pp. 24-25. For an account a similar instance in the writing of Thomas de Cantimpré, see, Wellens, "Cîteaux et l'Assomption," pp. 41-42.

120. Wellens, "Cîteaux et l'Assomption," pp. 40-45. In addition to the disapproval, there is some suggestion that the *Cogitis me* was not unilaterally accepted as Jerome's work. A thirteenth-century Cistercian breviary includes the *Cogitis me* with the title: "Sermo beati Maximii episcopi." Even more revealing than this is a letter, found in a manuscript from the Cistercian house of Cambron, in which Hincmar, the ninth-century bishop of Reims (+882) defended Jerome's authorship of the *Cogitis me*. Hincmar points to the many stylistic similarities between the *Cogitis me* and the "other" writings of Jerome. Hincmar states his belief that the *Cogitis me* was the work of Jerome, and not of the monk Radbertus, indicating that this was a matter of some debate. ("Omelia vero de assumptione sanctae Mariae, non a Radberto est compilata sed a sancto Iheronimo catholice dicta" quoted in D. C. Lambot, "L'homelie du Pseudo-Jerome sur l'Assomption et l'Evangelie de la Nativité de Marie dans une lettre inédite de Hincmar" *Revue bénedictine* 46 (1934): 269).

be with him in paradise.[121] This sermon was widely accepted as having patristic origin, and thus gave patristic authority to the doctrine of the Assumption.[122] In the *vita Abundi* Goswin reveals that hearing "Augustine's" sermon eased the tension that Abundus had felt while hearing the *Cogitis me*—a reaction which would doubtlessly have been shared by Bertram and others who objected to "Jerome's" ambiguity over what they held to be an unequivocal truth. The existence of both the *Cogitis me* and the Pseudo-Augustinian sermon indicates the important role that Mariology held in the high Middle Ages.

In addition to a new emphasis being placed on existing Marian traditions, the high Middle Ages saw new developments in Mariology. Around the twelfth century, it became common to identify the shulamite bride with the Inviolate Queen of Chastity. Given the prominence of the Virgin and the prevalence that the Song of Songs held among exegetes, the convergence of the two traditions is far from surprising.[123] Twelfth-century commentators including Alan of Lille, Honorius Augustodunensis, and the Liègeois Rupert of Deutz applied a Marian interpretation to the Song of Songs.[124] The descriptions of Solomon's shulamite bride- "*Tota pulchra es*" and "*macula non est in te*" were easily transferable to the Blessed Virgin; however, the remainder of the Song seems far removed from the Queen of Heaven.

It is not only modern sensibilities that are confounded by the equation of Mary and the bride; although it appears to have been generally accepted in Villers, there is some evi-

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121. Pseudo-Augustine, "De Assumptione," cc. 1141-1148, esp. c. 7, cc. 1147-1148.

122. In his Summa Theologica Thomas Aquinas refers to Augustine's "Tractate of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin" (ST 3. 27.1).

123. Song of Sol 1-8. Cf. Matter, *Voice of My Beloved,* pp. 328-29.

124. Turner, *Eros and Allegory*, pp. 47-49; Rachel Fulton, "Mimetic Devotion, Marian Exegesis, and the Historical Sense of the Song of Songs," *Viator* 27 (1996): 85-116; Matter, *Voice of My Beloved*, pp. 151-77. It is interesting to note that Bernard of Clairvaux, who was known for his Marian devotion, seldom mentions the Mother of God in his extensive writings on the Song of Songs. However, Bernard often uses the language and imagery of the Song in his sermons in praise of the Virgin. See M. B. Pranger, "The Virgin Mary and the Complexities of Love-Language in the Works of Bernard of Clairvaux," *Citeaux* 40 (1989): 120-22, esp. p. 122, n. 27.

dence that it was equally perplexing to some medieval monks. Honorius Augustodunensis' Marian commentary on the Song was a response to a repeated query from his community: "Why do we recite the Song of Songs on the feast of Mary's Assumption when it appears to have nothing at all to do with her?"[125] To explain the use of this text liturgically, it is necessary to keep in mind that Honorius believed the Song of Songs was used in the liturgy for dedicating churches. Instead of a literal reference to the Virgin, Honorius understood the Song of Songs to be related to the analogical and synecdochical relationship between Mary and the Church.

Honorius writes: "the glorious Virgin Mary bears the type of the Church, which stands as both virgin and mother...Therefore, all that is written of the Church is fittingly ascribed to [her]."[126] At first glance, Honorius' logic may appear arbitrary, but it is necessary to remember that a symbolic relationship between "Maria" and "*Ecclesia*" had been understood since the early Church. Patristic writers—Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome—had pointed out that both the Church and Mary are considered to be Christ's beloved; both are immaculate, yet both are married; and, though arguments have been made to the contrary, both bring Christ into this world without suffering the pains of giving birth.[127]

As religious commentators had begun to discuss Mariology in erotic language, it was logical that contemporary poets should have spoken of her in the language of courtly love or that hagiography should express, what at times appeared, a romantic yearning.[128]

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125. PL 172, c. 499.

126. "Gloriosa virgo Maria typum Ecclesia gerit, quae virgo et mater exstitit...Ideo cuncta quae de Ecclesia scribuntur, de ipsa satis congrue leguntur" (PL 172, cc. 499d-500a).

127. Ambrose, *Exposito evangeli secundum Lucam*, bk. 2, c. 7, p. 74. For a commentary on the significance of Ambrose's view, see Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 353-56; David G. Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride and the Church: Reading Psalm 45 in Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine," *Church History* 69 (2000): 285-90; Matter, *Voice of My Beloved*, pp. 155-59; Morgan, "Texts and Images," pp. 133-34; Oakes, "An Iconographic Study," pp. 48-50.

128. Don A. Monson, "The Troubadour's Lady Reconsidered Again" *Speculum* 70 (1995): 261, 269.

The Virgin, like the noble ladies of earthly courts, became the subject of adoration. Her titles "Our Lady," and "Queen of Heaven," which had been used as early as the fourth century, became increasingly widespread.[129] Her exquisite beauty and perfect chastity were praised in prayers that resembled nothing so much as troubadour songs.[130] Indeed, the Queen of Heaven held a position somewhat analogous to her earthly sisters: the ideal troubadour's lady was as virtuous as she was beautiful and it was not uncommon for the lady, or "*domina,*" to be of a superior social standing to the poet, thus rendering carnal union a social impossibility.[131]

Despite its essentially courtly nature, as is evident in the *vita* of the thirteenth-century mystic Herman Joseph, Marian devotion did occasionally have overtones of bridal mysticism. Herman had been devoted to the Blessed Virgin from his earliest days. In turn, the Queen of Heaven had rewarded him with tokens of her maternal love.[132] When Herman entered religious life, he developed the habit of prostrating himself whenever the Virgin's name was mentioned during communal prayers. Herman and his community were assured that this extraordinary form of devotion met with divine approval as whenever Herman showed his love for the Virgin in this way, the chapel was filled with a sweet

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129. Both titles are frequently used by Saint Ephraem, bishop of Syrus, (+373) ("Oratio ad Sanctissimam Dei Matrem," EM, p. 235; idem, "Oratio ad SS. Dei Genitricem," EM, p. 239; idem, "Sermo de SS. Dei Genetricis Virginis Mariae Laudibus," EM, p. 241. Gregory the Great (+604) refers to the Blessed Virgin as the "gloriosa regina mundi." ("Bendictio in Natali Sanctae Mariae," EM, p. 1250; Saint Germanus of Constantinople (+733) uses both titles ("Hymnus in SS. Deipara," EM, p. 1432). The examples of these titles being applied to the Blessed Virgin in the high Middle Ages are too numerous to mention individually, but are commonly associated with writers such as Anselm, Albert the Great and Bernard of Clairvaux. Cf. Morgan, "Texts and Images," pp. 128-34.

130. Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade*, p. 50, n. 104; Pranger, "The Virgin Mary," pp. 115-19.

131. For the debate on the relevance of the love-lyric to understanding the social reality of the Middle Ages see Monson, "Troubadour's Lady," pp. 255-57, especially p. 255, note 1. Cf. P[eter] Dinzelbacher, "Pour un histoire de l'amour au moyen âge" *Le Moyen Âge* 93 (1987): 226.

132. VHJ c. 1, par. 3, p. 688; ibid, c. 1, par. 6, p. 689.

scent.[133] Herman was given the religious name Joseph and was honoured to be associated with the Virgin's spouse. On the night that he received this name Herman had a dream in which two angels led his to a chapel where his association with Jesus' stepfather was make explicit.[134]

At first glance, Herman's mystical marriage to the Blessed Virgin is comparable to the bridal mysticism, which, as is discussed below was characteristic in *vitae* from the high Middle Ages. However, unlike Catherine of Siena's mystical marriage or Lutgard of Aywières' experience of mystical union with Christ, the marriage in Herman's *vita* has no erotic overtones. Instead, the hagiographer overtly draws a parallel between Herman and St. Joseph. As well as being Mary's spouse, Joseph was given the divine duty of protecting the Virgin and the Christ child during their time on earth. Throughout the *vita*, Herman's love for the Virgin is most often expressed in relation to her role as Christ's mother. The effusive devotion with which Herman serves the Mother of God stems from his implicit recognition of her role in the life of her Son.[135]

Bridal Mysticism

As has been stated above, it is clear that devotion to the Virgin differed from bridal mysticism. In order to make this difference clear and to understand the Marian devotion that is explained in the next chapter, some explanation of Bridal mysticism is necessary. In addition to its Marian application, the Song of Songs remained a popular metaphor for expressing the relationship between the human soul—the grammatically feminine *anima*—and her creator. The language of *eros*, words that depict a yearning more spiritual than physical, had always been a part of the Christian tradition. The psalmist describes the

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133. VHJ c. 3, par. 16, p. 693.

134. VHJ c. 4, par. 21-22, p. 695.

135. Cf. Leclercq, "The Queen Mother," pp. 57-77.

soul as "yearning" for God in the same manner that the deer yearns for running streams (Ps 41: 1-2), and "thirsting" for God as desert land thirsts for water (Ps 142: 6); the Song of Songs is often interpreted as depicting the erotic longing between two lovers on their wedding night (cf. Song of Sol 1-8).[136] Despite the biblical roots of the erotic tradition, if such imagery were common in the devotional texts of the earlier Middle Ages, all traces have now vanished. From the twelfth century onwards however, this begins to change: saints' *lives* frequently depict their subjects as brides of Christ; devotional tractates exhort the longing felt by souls to be united with the divine and the Song of Songs regained its earlier popularity as a subject for exegesis.[137]

The genre of erotic or bridal mysticism is often discussed as an aspect of the devotional lives of women in the later Middle Ages and can be seen in the *vitae* of the Liègeoise *mulieres sanctae*.[138] The beguine mystics Hadewijch and Mechthild of Magdeburg, rejoice in the personification of the divine, which they refer to as "Love": these women depict themselves both as knights pursuing the beloved, and as maidens who are being pursued. They, particularly Hadewijch, view Love as the source and reason for all life: the heavenly creator is Love incarnate—without whom, there is "worse than nothingness."[139] In a vocation envied by male confessors, and even suggested to be analogous to the male vo-

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136. Denys Turner, *Eros and Allegory* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1995), pp. 47-49. Cf. C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1960), pp. 106-32.

137. For a discussion of bridal mysticism in art see, Jeffrey Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), pp. 383-417.

138. Newman, *From VirileWoman to WomanChrist*, pp. 137-38, 144-45 and 150-51; Saskia Murk-Jansen, *Brides in the Desert: The Spirituality of the Beguines* (New York: Orbis Books, 1998), pp. 89-96; Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 246-48. Other studies that examine the role of bridal mysticism or *eros* in the Song of Songs and do not address the questions of gender include: Turner, *Eros and Allegory*; Stephen D. Moore, "The Song of Songs in the History of Sexuality" *Church History* 69 (2000): 328-29).

139. Quoted in, Newman, *From VirileWoman to WomanChrist*, p. 154. Cf. Newman, *From VirileWoman to WomanChrist*, pp. 137-67; idem, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), pp. 169-81.

cation of the priesthood, female saints were portrayed, and portray themselves as brides of Christ: rapt before, penetrated by, and fully united with their maker.[140]

The *vitae* of female saints almost invariably record elements of erotic longing for God. Although sensual language appears to be more common in the *vitae* of women than in those of their male contemporaries, such incidents are not unknown. The *Gnaden-Vita* of Friedrich Sunder records an incident in which the saint held Jesus close on what was explicitly referred to as a bridal bed,

> ...then spoke the infant Christ, the child of Our Lady: 'Dear Mother, make a joyous bed for me and my beloved spouse where I and my beloved bride can take our pleasure with each other.' Then the bed was made with lots of beautiful flowers (which were noble spiritual virtues), then Jesus advanced to the little bed, and Mary, his holy mother, joined [Friedrich's] holy soul with the little Jesus. And they had such loving joy and pleasure with one another by embracing and kissing, by laughing and with taking divine pleasure so that the angels and saints who were gathered about, were altogether amazed that such a man still on this earth was living with body and soul, with which our Lord worked such a wonder.[141]

Moreover, male-authored treatises and sermons from the high Middle Ages, many of which were in the Villers library catalogue of 1309, convey an intensely passionate relationship between creator and created.[142] Bernard of Clairvaux reminds his audience that the faithful soul, once having known the joys of love without measure, cannot rest until she is again in God's presence.[143] William of St. Thierry (+ c.1148) speaks of the soul's

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140. Coakley, "A Marriage and its Observer," pp. 99-117; idem, "Friars as Confidants of Holy Women in Medieval Dominican Hagiography," in *Images of Sainthood*, pp. 222-46; Anne L. Clark, "The Priesthood of the Virgin Mary: Gender Trouble in the Twelfth Century," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 18 (2002): 16.

141. Ringler, *Viten* p. 415: 848 f. Quoted in and translated by Hamburger, *Visual and the Visionary*, p. 146. Cf. Hindsley, *The Mystics*, p.106, n. 99.

142. "I saw, standing in front of the altar...an image of the Lord Saviour. As I was in deep contemplation, I recognised the crucified Lord himself crucified in that very place and I beheld him, living, in my mind's eye...I took hold of him whom my soul loves, I held him, I embraced him, I kissed him lingeringly. I sensed how gratefully he accepted this gesture of love, when, between kissing, he himself opened his mouth, in order that I might kiss more deeply" (Quoted in Robert Mills, "Ecce Homo," in *Gender and Holiness*, p. 152, n. 1. Cf. Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, pp. 161-62; Mills, "Ecce Homo," pp. 152-73, esp. 153 nn. 2-3, p. 153, n. 7).

143. Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu* (Latin and French) ed. and trans. Françoise Callerhort et al. Sources Chrétiennes, no. 393 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1993), c. 4, par. 13, c. 9, 28, c. 10, 29, p.134. Cf. Leclercq, *Mariage vu par les moines*, pp. 105-22.

overpowering thirst to be united with her maker.[144] Hugh of St. Victor (+1141) writes of the pain and emptiness of worldly love as empty; he compared it unfavourably to the perfect love that God showed his creation.[145]

A created being was feminine, that is passive and receptive in relation to its masculine, or active and controlling creator. The human soul, whether in male or female flesh, was feminine in relation to God. There were obvious problems in depicting a male saint having an erotic and sensual relationship with a male deity, yet many religious men were aware of themselves, or portrayed in hagiography, as brides of Christ.[146] Medieval writings stress that these men were united with their creator through their feminine souls (*animae*) or as being part of the Church (*Ecclesia*), Christ's feminine bride. In other instances, it appears that the important symbol was the union between the human and divine, and both gender roles and traditional binaries were seemingly unimportant. It was common for God to be synonymous with Lady Poverty (*Paupertas)* or Lady Wisdom (*Sapientia*); in beguine writings, the divine was feminised as Lady Love (*Minne*).[147]

The language of union pervaded all manner of medieval didactic literature. In what appears a fitting expression for the passion connected with a longed-for union, hagiographers used sensual and erotic imagery. This is common in the *vitae* and writings of saints of both genders. Moreover, *vitae* commonly stress a parallel between their subjects and Solomon's bride, which, by extension depicted male and female saints as brides of Christ.[148]

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144. William of St. Thierry, *De Contemplando Deo* (Latin and French) ed. and trans. Jacques Hourlier. Sources Chrétiennes no. 61 bis (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1977), bk. 1, c. 2, p. 60.

145. Hugh of St. Victor, "De Archa Noe" in *Hvgonis de Sancto Victore: Opera*, ed. P. Sicard and D. Poirel. Corpvs Christanorvm 176.1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), bk. 1, c. 1-2, pp. 1-8. Cf. Leclercq, *Mariage vu par les moines*, pp. 45-47.

146. Hindsley, *The Mystics*, pp. 106-08.

147. Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, pp. 206-22.

148. John Coakley, "A Marriage and its Observer: Christine of Stommeln, the Heavenly Bridegroom and Peter of Dacia," in *Gendered Voices*, pp. 99-117.

In the Villers *vitae*, images expressing an erotic yearning are most frequently a further manifestation of devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Remembering that both the language of yearning and devotion to the Queen of Heaven were prevalent themes in the spiritual climate of the high Middle Ages and of particular significance to the Cistercian Order will elucidate the more focussed analysis in chapters three and four.

The Vocation of Chivalry

The high Middle Ages saw the beginnings of knighthood as a vocation, but it also saw a tendency for knightly service to take on elements of romance. Knights became central characters in twelfth- and thirteenth-century secular writings, and knightly tournaments became popular, as both demonstrations of chivalry and as contests of military prowess. At first glance, these chivalrous ideals are completely incompatible with any form of religious vocation, let alone the new knighthood that was praised by Bernard. However, this new knightly ideal was put to a religious application: it expressed devotion to the Blessed Virgin, provided justification for crusading, and promoted chivalrous ideals such as honour and charity. As such, this saintly knight embodied the emerging ideal of the chivalrous vocation.

In addition to being praised by troubadours, the great ladies of noble courts were served by knights. While being loyal to their lord, these knights often fought in their lady's name and wore tokens showing their devotion to her in tournaments or in battle. As was the case with any well-ordered kingdom, the heavenly realm had faithful knights who honoured its queen while defending the interests of its king: in this case, knights, including Godefridus Cappenbergensis, who honoured the Blessed Virgin, while defending Christendom from heretics and the infidel.

Like her earthly counterparts, the Queen of Heaven made her Lord's cause her own, and favoured those who fought for it.[149] Despite her title of Queen of Peace, it appeared that during a war in defence of righteousness, the Blessed Virgin was perfectly at ease on the battlefield. The Blessed Virgin became patroness of those on crusade. Crusaders often carried banners or shields bearing the Virgin's image and sang songs in her praise. The Virgin's tunic was acknowledged as a powerful relic to aid the crusaders; individual crusaders, notably Richard the Lion-heart, were particularly devoted to her;[150] and crusade chronicles tell of instances where the Blessed Virgin appeared in the midst of a battle, or made her presence known in some other way.[151] Even in hagiography, the Virgin is often associated with crusading.[152]

Expressing one's love for the Queen of Heaven in the same manner as would be accepted for an earthly *domina* became a central part of the developing vocation of chivalry. However, in both the Villers *vitae* and contemporary hagiography portraying saints as the new *milites Christi* went beyond this. The following discussion examines the role of military imagery in the Christian tradition, with a particular focus on its application in the high Middle Ages and its relevance to men, the Cistercian Order and the southern Low Countries at this time.[153]

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149. This was compounded by the identification of Mary with the Church. It was common for the crusade vocation to be promoted by explicitly stressing that the crusaders were defending their "Lady" (Both Maria and Ecclesia) from the infidel (Anne Dunlop, "Masculinity, Crusading, and Devotion: Francesco Casali's Fresco in the Trecento Perugian *Contado*" *Speculum* 76 (2001): 332; J. P. Jourdan, "Le langue d'amour dans le combat de chevalerie à la fin du Moyen Age" *Le Moyen Âge* 99 (1993): 83, 93-94).

150. M. Michaud, *L'Histoire des Croisaides* (Paris: Furne et Cie Éditeurs, 1854), bk. 3, pp. 33-34; Rachel Dressler, "Deus Hoc Vult: Identity and Sculptural Rhetoric at the Time of the Crusades" *Medieval Encounters* 1 (1995): 195. Caesarius of Heisterbach includes a tale of a Knight who spares Marie, a virgin whom he had bought, because she shared a name with his "domina," the Blessed Virgin Mary (DM t. 2).

151. Joinville and Villhardouin *Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans, M. R. B. Shaw (London: 1970), p. 314.

152. VLA bk. 2, c. 2, pp. 243-44.

153. VGA bk. 1, c. 1, par. 13-16; VWA p. 449 (devotion to St. Martin).

Battle imagery abounds in both early Christian, and Judeo-Christian writings: the psalmist repeatedly thanks God for deliverance from his enemies, and St. Paul refers to the Christian faithful as "soldiers of Christ."[154] It must be kept in mind that Christianity developed in the Mediterranean world, where an ideal of masculinity was already prevalent: in the ancient Mediterranean world, "manliness" was measured in terms of military prowess, physical strength and one's ability to gain secular or political authority. In the high Middle Ages, it became reluctantly accepted that such gifts could be used in defence of the faith. However, secular ideals of masculinity in the classical world seemed incompatible with Christian teachings: controlling a substantial military force and showing unusual skill at arms was not compatible with the ideals of peace, humility and subservience extolled in Christian writings.

Although explicit use of force was controversial, military imagery had always been a part of the Christian tradition. *Passio* literature describes its heroes—both men and women—as "*milites Christi.*"[155] In a language which was to be echoed in monastic rules throughout the Middle Ages, the "Christian soldier" was called upon to take up the weapons of Christ—truth, justice and scripture—and to combat the sin and chaos caused by the Old Enemy. Hagiography continued to extol spiritual warfare after the persecutions: the *vita* of St. Anthony, which had a tremendous influence on hagiography throughout the Middle Ages, portrays its subject being beset by demons, which he valiantly fought with the arms of Christian virtue.

From the late eleventh century onwards, crusading, or defending the Holy Land from the "infidel" became seen as a social necessity, and it is no surprise that literal expressions of Christian military imagery again became common. Contemporary codes of chivalry stressed that those gifted with military prowess were obliged to protect the innocent.

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154. 2 Tim 2: 3, 4-5; Eph 6: 11-12, 14-17.

155. Bugge, *Virginitas*, pp. 52-56; Barbara Rosenwein and Lester K. Little, "Social Meaning in the Monastic and Mendicant Spiritualities" *Past and Present* 63 (1974): 317-31.

This same motif is found in the *vitae* of knights and rulers such as Charles the Good and Gerald of Aurillac whose *vitae* remained popular throughout the high Middle Ages.[156] In Clermont during the year 1095, pope Urban II issued a dramatic proclamation, *De expeditione Hierosolymitana*, which declared that it was the duty of all Christian faithful to defend Christendom, their Christian brethren and the name of Christ.[157] The aim of those pilgrims who responded to Urban's challenge was to re-establish Christian control in the Holy Land. In this, they were successful; however, the majority of the crusaders immediately returned to their homes in the West, leaving the liberated Holy Land vulnerable to potential Muslim attack. A new form of religious devotion answered the problem of defending the land where Christ had lived. Throughout the twelfth century, a steady stream of armed pilgrims from Western Europe, particularly from the Low Countries, headed to the kingdom of Jerusalem.[158] In addition to those who saw it as their Christian duty to defend the Holy Land, some viewed the armed pilgrimage as a way of showing their repentance or making satisfaction for sin. The *vita* of John of Cantimpré relates the tale of the heretic Walter of Flos. After repenting the heretical ideas of his early life, Walter resolved to make an armed pilgrimage to the Holy Land.[159]

In the early days of crusading, the call to arms had been directed to all the Christian faithful; unarmed peasants and even women had accompanied trained militia on the quest

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156. "De B. Carolo Bono Comite Flandriae," in *AASS* Mar. v. 1, c. 1, par. 9, p. 165; Odo of Cluny, "De S. Geraldo Comite Auriliacensi," in *AASS* Oct. 6, bk. 1, c. 1, par. 11-13, p. 302.

157. Alan Forey, "The Military Orders and the Conversion of Muslims in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries" *JMH* 28 (2002): 13-18.

158. James M. Powell, *Anatomy of a Crusade, 1213-1221* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), pp. 58-63; James Brundage, "*Cruce Signati*: The Rite for Taking the Cross in England" *Traditio* 22 (1966): 289-310.

159. VIC bk. 1, c. 10, pp. 264-65. Cf. VMO bk. 2, par. 45; Aryeh Graboïs, *Le pèlerin occidental en Terre sainte au Moyen Âge* Bibliothèque du Moyen Âge 13 (Paris and Brussels: De Boek Université, 1998), pp. 67-71.

to free the Holy Land.[160] By the end of the twelfth century, a crusader had come to be defined as a man with some military training, who was called to use this gift to defend Christendom, his Christian brethren and the name of Christ.[161] The social background of some of the Villers brothers meant that they would be familiar with this form of devotion.

These later crusaders were known as the knights of Christ (*milites Christi*). They had been signed with the cross and were expected to uphold Christian ideals both in the East and in their own lands.[162] Devotional literature written for aristocratic laymen reminded its audience of the benefits, both spiritual and material, of using the gift of military prowess in the Lord's service. In this way the vocation of the *miles Christi,* which can be seen in the *vitae* of men such as Gerald of Aurilac, became firmly entrenched in the devotional climate of Western Europe.[163] Moreover, the same period saw the creation of military orders, significantly the Knights Templar, which was both affiliated with the Cistercian Order and counted many noble houses of the southern Low Countries among its patrons.[164]

160. The ill-fated children's crusade is well-documented. Recent scholarship has examined the role of women in crusading. The efforts of women were largely in a supporting role, however, there is some evidence of female armed combat (Michael R. Evans, "Unfit to Bear Arms: the Gendering of Arms and Armour in Accounts of Women on Crusade," in *Gendering the Crusades*, Susan B. Edginton and Sarah Lambert ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 51-56; Keren Caspi-Reisfeld, "Women Warriors during the Crusades, 1095-1254," in *Idem,* pp. 94-107

161. This ideal is perhaps best illustrated in Bernard of Clairvaux's Praise of the New Knighthood (Bernard of Clairvaux, *Éloge de la nouvelle Chevalerie* (Latin and French). Sources Chrétiennes, no. 367 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1990). Cf. Morris, "Equestris Ordo," pp. 87-96.

162. Geoffrey G. Koziol, "Monks, Feuds, and the Making of Peace in Eleventh-Century Flanders" in *Essays on the Peace of God,* ed. Thomas Head and Richard Landes (Waterloo: University of Waterloo, 1987), pp. 531-32; Runciman, *First Crusade*, pp. 86-87.

163. Dunlop, "Masculinity, Crusading, and Devotion," p. 330; Steven F. Kruger, "Merchants and Jews: Marginal Medieval Masculinities in Confrontation." Conference Paper Presented at, *Masculinity, Patriarchy and Power*. University of Southampton. April 6, 2004.

164. James Brundage, "*Cruce Signati*," pp. 289-310; idem, "The Crusader's Wife: A Canonistic Quandary," in *The Crusades, Holy War and Canon Law* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1991), pp. 427-41; idem, *Medieval Canon Law and the Crusader* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), pp. 10-15, 136-38; Barber, *New Knighthood*, pp. 10-40. Though many connections exist between the Templars and the Cistercians, it is important to keep in mind that the Templars were not merely "Cistercian militia," but constituted a separate order with its own administrative structures (Selwood, *Knights of the Cloister,* p. 143, esp. n. 4). There are, however, many links between the Cistercians and crusading. Eugenius

In keeping with this vocation of chivalry came an increase in devotion to the quintessential *miles Christi,* Martin of Tours, who is frequently named in Liègeoise hagiography.[165] Martin's story is familiar to most medievalists. The future bishop of Tours was born in the mid-fourth century to a military family, and was therefore required by Roman law to serve as a soldier. He was baptised while still in the army, and despite Christian prohibitions on military service remained a soldier for some time following his baptism.[166] Martin's hagiographer, Sulpicius Severus, does not provide a detailed account of Martin's time in the military, but simply states that Martin lived in such a way that he seemed more a monk than he did a soldier.[167] In Sulpicius' telling, Martin's military career came to an abrupt end when he confronted the emperor Julian, and stated that he could not, as a Christian, participate in a forthcoming battle. Martin was then dismissed from

III, a former Cistercian, was in large part responsible for initiating the Second Crusade, which, is generally hailed as an unmitigated disaster. However, as many kingdoms from both Northern and Southern Europe contributed resources to the crusade effort the second major crusade can be seen as the first truly catholic effort to defend Christendom. For Eugenius' role see, Steven Runciman, *The Kingdom of Jerusalem* vol. 2, The History of the Crusades (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), bk. 3, pp. 247-49. For a discussion of Cistercian involvement, see, Jean Leclercq, *Bernard of Clairvaux and the Cistercian Spirit* trans. Claire Lavoie (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1987), pp. 63-70; Lekai, *Cistercians*, pp. 52-64; Malcolm Barber, "The Social Context of the Templars," in *Crusaders and Heretics* ed. Malcolm Barber (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995), pp. 35-37; idem, *New Knighthood*, pp. 15-18; Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade*, pp. 5-6, 45-46, 135-73. Cf. DM t. 1, bk. 5, c. 21, p. 302. A. J. Forey, "Novitiate and Instruction in the Military Orders during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries" *Speculum* 61 (1986): 1-17; J. F. O'Callaghan, "The Affiliation of the Order of Calatrava with the Order of Citeaux" *Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis* 16 (1960): 3-59, esp. 13-16.).

165. VIC bk. 3, c. 2, p. 310. Examples from the Villers corpus are discussed in Chapter Three. Cf. Jean Leclercq, "Saint Martin dans l'hagiographie monastique du moyen âge," *St. Martin et son temps* (Rome: Studia Anselmiana, 1961), pp. 180-85; Rosenwein and Little, "St Odo's St. Martin," pp. 321-28.

166. Christopher Donaldson, *Martin of Tours: Parish Priest, Monk Exorcist* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 26; Heffernan, "Christian Biography," pp. 137-42; Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, p. 107. For a discussion of Martin's military career see, Jacques Fontaine, *Vie de Saint Martin* vol. 2 (Paris: Les Éditions de Cerf, 1967), pp. 436-44.

167. "...ut iam illo tempore non miles, sed monachus putaretur" (Sulpicius Severus, *Vie de St. Martin*, ed. and trans. Jacques Fontaine. Sources Chrétiennes 133, bk. 1 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1967), c. 2, par.7, p. 256).

military service and fulfilled a life-long dream of founding a community of desert-hermits before forcibly being made bishop of Tours.[168]

It is tempting to attribute Martin's popularity in later medieval hagiography to the increased emphasis on the importance of military service; however, it is clear from even a cursory reading of the *vita Martini* that Sulpicius was neither interested in Martin's skill as a soldier nor his obedience to his military superiors.[169] Instead, Sulpicius focuses on developing Martin as a religious leader: he praises Martin's charity, compassion and the leadership qualities he developed both in his desert community, and during his time as bishop of Tours.[170]

The fact remains that Martin of Tours was prominent in the hagiography of the later Middle Ages. If this cannot be attributed to Martin's military proficiency and the rise of the spiritual soldier of Christ as a model of the ideal religious life, it is necessary to find another explanation. It is seemingly significant that Martin experienced tremendous spiritual growth after leaving the army, and that his military service seemingly aided his later spiritual development. It is almost a *topos* of later medieval hagiography for holy men who had been on crusade and subsequently entered religious life.[171] For these men, as for Martin, military service was a time of listening for the call to conversion, of pondering ways that this call could be implemented in their lives and of completing the ac-

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168. Sulpicius, *Vie de St. Martin*, pp. 248-345.

169. The *vita Martini* devotes remarkably little attention to Martin's time in the army (Sulpicius, *Vita Martini*, c. 2, par. 2-5, pp. 254-61. There is some evidence that Sulpicius altered the chronology of the *vita Martini* in order to make it appear that Martin had spent two years in the military rather than twenty-five. For an argument favouring the altered chronology see Timothy D. Barnes, "The Military Career of Martin of Tours" *AB* 114 (1996): 25-32. For a contrary opinion see, Clare Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer: History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 111-39.

170. Sulpicius, *Vita Martini*, bk. 4-6, par. 9-24, pp. 262-309.

171. Dressler, "Deus Hoc Vult," pp. 193-94; Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade*, p. 42; Leclercq, "Conversion to the Monastic Life," pp. 230-31; Morris, "Equestris Ordo," pp. 193-238.

tive service, or purgation, necessary to bring conversion to its fulfilment. For this reason, men seeking to perfect the monastic life would certainly have invoked Martin.[172] As is discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to Mary Magdalene, themes associated with Martin are prevalent in the Villers *vitae* even when he is not explicitly named.

In addition to crusading fervour, the Cistercian Order was diligent in combating the Cathar heresy, which, as is discussed earlier in this chapter was a cause of some concern in Liège and may have influenced portrayals of intensely somatic spirituality in the Liègeoise *vitae*. Villers was particularly active in preventing the spread of Catharism: the abbot Conrad (+ 1214) completed a mission among the heretics that resulted in his being made cardinal. On this endeavour, Conrad had been accompanied by at least one monk from Villers.[173] Whether or not the physicality of the forms of religious expression portrayed in the Villers corpus resulted from unease about the Cathars, it is likely that, as Liègeoise Cistercians, both the Villers saints and their hagiographers would have been concerned about the potential dangers inherent in the Cathar heresy.[174]

From the twelfth century onwards, the hagiographic record reflects an increasing number of saints who spent time on crusade. The hagiographers of these saints often framed their subjects' vocations in the language and imagery of knighthood. Although, these saints very seldom ended their lives in military service, their hagiographers typically por-

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172. Leclercq, "Saint Martin," pp. 183-84. The Cistercian Order observed Martin's feast (EO 60, c. 28, p. 186).

173. CV pp. 198-99. Cf. Cawley, "Four Abbots," p. 312.

174. Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade*, pp. 90-108, 135-73; Lekai, *The Cistercians*, pp. 54-56. The celebrated *vita Mariae Oigniacensis* is dedicated to Fulk of Toulouse, an orthodox bishop who fled to Liège after being forced from his diocese by the Cathars. In the prologue Jacques relates that Fulk developed a particular admiration for the holy women of Liège (VMO, prologue, par. 1-11, pp. 636-38). Jacques also promoted the crusade against the Albigensians throughout Liège see, Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade*, p. 167; H. Van Werveke, "La contribution de la Flandre et du Hainaut à la troisième croisade" *Le Moyen Âge* 78 (1972): 55-59, 89-90; Moreau, *L'Église Feodale*, pp. 531-36.

trayed the language and imagery of warfare as being integral to their vocations. In the high Middle Ages the traditional definition of *milites Christi,* was expanded from simply those who suffered for Christ, to include saints who lived a vocation of chivalry.

Conclusion

Sanctity is principally a social phenomenon; saints were primarily social constructs and *vitae* were something of a codification of the types of behaviour a society acknowledged as ideal. In order for any individual to be recognised as a saint, it was necessary for their *vita* to reflect those qualities their society recognised as holy. The same themes can be found, to varying extents, in virtually all *vitae* from the high Middle Ages. As this chapter has shown, the themes of conversion, visionary experiences, Marian devotion and chivalry, which are later discussed as being integral to the Villers corpus, were prevalent not only in the spiritual climate of the southern Low Countries and in Cistercian writings, but can also be seen in emerging devotional practices throughout Europe in the high Middle Ages. While this elucidates the prominence of these four themes in the Villers *vitae,* it does not explain their particular relevance to Rheno-Mosan spirituality. The purpose of the above discussion was to place the dominant themes of the *vitae* in their historical context. Chapter Two analyses these themes in the Villers *vitae,* which begins to complement the thematic study of the *vitae* of their female contemporaries, thus facilitating the examination of the influence of gender on portrayals of holiness in the hagiography from the high Middle Ages which is the focus of Chapter Four.

Chapter Three: *Quis Est Homo Qui Vult Vitam?:* A Thematic Exploration of the Constructions of Holiness in the Villers corpus

Traditionally, medievalists have viewed the *vitae* of holy men as sources of information: either historical fact such as Pope Innocent III calling on Bernard to preach the Second Crusade and Dominic being granted permission to found a new order, or influential legend for example, Thomas Aquinas being fed by angels or Francis receiving the stigmata. Recent scholarly attention to the *lives* of female saints has taken a very different approach. While the *vitae virorum* have almost unilaterally been viewed as catalogues of events, scholars interested in *vitae mulierum*, at least from the high Middle Ages, have been concerned with prominent themes in their subjects' religious devotion, such as fasting, physical asceticism or visionary experiences. More attention has been given to Francis' founding of the Franciscans than his rich visionary experiences, while Christina of St. Trond is more familiar for her wild asceticism than her advisory role to Count Louis of Looz.[1] As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, attention to devotional themes in the *lives* of holy women has yielded many valuable insights into the spiritual climate of the later Middle Ages. Thematic exploration of the *vitae* of female saints far exceeds the work on the same in the *lives* of their male contemporaries. This chapter discusses devotional themes used in constructing holiness in the *vitae* of men. It takes the four forms of devotion discussed in Chapter Two—conversion, visionary experiences, Marian devotion and chivalry—and examines their role in the *vitae* of the Villers saints. It analyses the role and purpose of each theme in the *vitae*, both as a rhetorical device and in relation to the spirituality of the Villers brothers.

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1. "Vita Prima" bk. 2, c. 3, pp. 308-11; "Vita Secunda" bk. 1, c. 6, pp. 370-71; idem, bk. 1, c. 13, pp. 379-80; VC M cc. 1-3, par. 3-19, pp. 651-53 (asceticism), c. 5, par. 30-33, pp. 655-56 (advisory role).

These themes being prominent in the *lives* of male saints does not automatically render them "masculine." However, as has been done for such themes as food and visionary experiences in the *lives* of holy women from the high Middle Ages, thematic analysis of the *vitae virorum* will allow insight into the paths to holiness that hagiographers perceived and constructed for their male subjects. Such analysis is a necessary first step towards identifying the ways in which religious men from the high Middle Ages perceived their relationship with God. Searching for masculine devotional expression in no way diminishes the importance of the findings of scholarship on feminine devotion. Rather, an analysis of devotional themes in the *vitae* of male saints would provide very different, but equally valuable insights into the medieval devotional climate. At the same time this thesis, and subsequent thematic studies of masculine devotion will augment and enhance discussions of the relationship between gender and devotional expression.

Conversion

Goswin of Bossut began the *vita Arnulfi* by reminding his audience of a traditional Cistercian precept: the paths to holiness are as numerous as the varieties of trees or flowers, and like foliage, each form of holiness produces its own fruits.[2] In the Villers *vitae*, each saint's spiritual journey is unique, yet each text is also formulaic.[3] Although the individual character of each man in the Villers corpus is apparent, each follows the same

2. "Sicut in germinibus herbarum atque lignorum, quae terra producit non una species, nec unum in omnibus genus est; sed singula quaeque in sui generis est sed singula quaeque in sui generis forma, & tuae stirpis qualitate gignuntur; plenum autem decorum non statim ut eduntur accipiunt, sed certis & ordinates provehuntur augmentis, donec ad perfectum sui habitus quantitatem, per succedentia sibi incrementa perveniant: ita & semina divinorum charismatum, plantaeque virtutum, non in omni agro cordis humani, totum hoc pariter quod sunt futura nascuntur; nec facile reperitur in exordio maturitas & in inchoatione perfectio" (VAR preface, par. 1, p. 608).

3. Bredero, *Bernard of Clairvaux*, pp. 63-81; Chrysogonus Waddell, "The Exegetical Challenge of Early Cistercian Hagiography" *CSQ* 21 (1986): 204-05.

threefold path to holiness.[4] The three stages discussed in Chapter Two—the initial desire to turn towards God; a period of either making satisfaction or having one's vocation tested; and, finally, public recognition as being a channel for the divine—are clearly evident in the Villers corpus.

The following examination of the journey of conversion is divided into three sections, which accord with the model described in Chapter Two: repentance, purgation and illumination. Although the threefold model of conversion was not universal, the frequency and consistency with which it appears suggests that it has some value as a tool for examining hagiographic texts. The discussion of conversion in this chapter concentrates primarily on six of the eleven *vitae*, but considers the importance of, and makes reference to the other five.[5]

Stage One—Repentance: The *life* of Arnulfus, the *conversus* from Villers, is an example of a worldly young man whose journey of conversion enabled him to progress towards sainthood. His hagiographer, Goswin of Bossut, began the first book of the *vita* by reminding his audience of the great sanctity that Arnulfus achieved in his later life and thus demonstrating that Arnulfus was destined, even before his birth, to be a friend of God. After he had established Arnulfus' sanctity, Goswin was free to inform his audience of Arnulfus' sinful youth.[6] Although he is clear that Arnulfus spent his youth in a questionable manner, Goswin does not describe this time in any detail. Instead, Goswin records that Arnulfus renounced his life of sin and resolved to dedicate himself to the Lord,

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4. The threefold path to holiness was prevalent in Christian writings since patristic times. In the high Middle Ages, it can be seen in the writings of Caesarius of Heisterbach and Bonaventure (Bonaventure, *De Triplici Via alias Incendium Amoris*, Fontes Christiani no. 14 (Frieburg: Herder, 1993), Prologue, p. 94; DM t. 1, bk. 1, cc. 1-2, pp. 5-8). For a detailed discussion, see Chapter Two of this thesis.

5. The *vitae* of Nicholas and Petrus are too short to contain every aspect of the model that is analysed here; the *life* of Walter focuses almost exclusively on his development after his call to conversion and his devotion to the Blessed Virgin; the *vita Herrici* is written in verse, and it seems that poetic concerns superseded the goal of presenting a coherent spiritual journey.

6. Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, pp. 100-19.

seemingly as a devout layman. The *vita* describes Arnulfus' entry to the religious life in some detail.[7] While he was still in the process of discerning his path, a comely woman appeared in Arnulfus' bed, and attempted, unsuccessfully, to arouse his lust. Arnulfus immediately went to Villers and offered himself as a *conversus*. Sexuality was often portrayed as a symbol of worldly attachment and thus confronting and overcoming sexual urges can be seen as a clear sign of beginning a religious life.[8]

The same model is present, though less explicitly, in the *life* of Simon. Simon's hagiographer begins the *vita* by reminding his audience of the holiness, compassion and nobility that were widely known as Simon's characteristics.[9] Only after reminding his audience of this does the hagiographer begin to tell Simon's story. Simon was born to a noble family and there is every indication that his early life had been spent in a worldly manner.[10] In late adolescence, Simon encountered the house of Aulne, where he was so moved by the monks' fervour and compassion that he entered the community, unbeknownst to his family, as a lay brother and a shepherd.[11] Simon's hagiographer presents a detailed description of the contrition and penitence that Simon showed shortly after beginning his religious life.[12]

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7. For a discussion of the "hierarchy" that existed between lay and religious forms of holiness in the medieval Church see, Ann Astell, "Introduction" in *Lay Sanctity Medieval and Modern: A Search for Models*, edited by Ann Astell (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2000), pp. 1-26.

8. VAR bk. 1, c. 1, par. 6, pp. 609-10. Cf. VAB c. 9, pp. 20-21. Weinstein and Bell remind us that, "concupiscence was...much more than lust; it was the desire for any part of the world, any need of the self that stood in the way of loving God" (Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, p. 84, cf. ibid, pp. 73-99).

9. VSA f. 209r, par. 1.

10. This is not necessarily true of the historical Simon. As is described in Chapter One, Caesarius described him as coming from a family of shepherds.

11. In 1188, the Cistercian Chapter General insisted that nobles who wished to adopt the Cistercian way of life become monks, and not *conversi* (Statuta t. 1, 1188 c. 8, p. 108 cf. *Twelfth-century Statutes*, 1188, c. 10, p. 151). The nobility *topos*, common throughout the Middle Ages was no longer prevalent in twelfth- and thirteenth-century hagiography, and allusions to a noble family background are otherwise absent from the *vitae* of lay brothers.

12. VSA f. 209v, par. 2.

The *vitae* of Arnulfus and Simon make it clear that these men had spent their early lives focussed on worldly concerns yet, neither *vita* describes this period in detail. As hagiography was intended, in part, to illustrate paths to holiness, details of their misspent youth were not important. It is significant however, that by mentioning that these saints had once lived as sinners, the hagiographers emphasised their human failings. In this way they allowed the audience, almost certainly including persons uncertain of their own salvation, to relate to Simon and Arnulfus. At the same time, it would remind the audience that the mercy of God knows no bounds. As the *Rule of St. Benedict* reminds us, the Lord does not desire the death of the sinner, but that he turn back and live.[13]

In medieval didactic literature, dramatic contrition was not synonymous with conversion. Their initial encounter with God's mercy prompted the saints to break with their past. In these texts, it caused Arnulfus to renounce sin and Simon to turn away from worldly affairs. After their initial repentance, both men resolved to leave behind their worldly ways and to devote the remainder of their lives to Christ.[14] For both Arnulfus and Simon, answering the call to contrition was radical: yet, both hagiographers portray it as merely the beginning of the progression towards sainthood.

A different application of the same model can be seen in the *lives* of the Villers brothers who had been knights, Charles of Villers, Walter of Birbech and Gobertus of Aspermont. Despite the controversies surrounding the Christian application of military force, the hagiographers of these men neither attempt to disguise nor apologise for their military past. Instead, they expound upon the knights' skill in combat and military reputation. When beginning their journey of conversion, these knights put their skills to a profoundly different application. The knights began to direct their every action towards

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13. RSB Prologue, 38.

14. Philip Schmitz, "Conversatio Morum," DS vol. 2, cc. 2206-2212.

God, and to use their military prowess, education or influence in the secular world to build God's earthly kingdom.

At the beginning of the *vita Caroli*, Charles' hagiographer introduced him as a man with qualities, cultivated in the schools of Paris, that would guarantee his success in the secular world: namely, an education and skill in the arts of warfare and diplomacy.[15] He had befriended such noble personages as the sons of the emperor Frederick and Philip the archbishop of Cologne. Charles gained such respect among his colleagues that when he left the army to join the religious life, a number chose to join him. Many of those men became abbots and priors of Cistercian houses in Brabant, and proved useful contacts during Charles' abbacy.[16]

The first stages of the *vita Caroli* are little more than a prologue to Charles' devotional life. Although Charles' hagiographer discusses the contacts he made during his time in the world, he says very little about Charles' conduct. His discussion of Charles' journey of conversion began with a vision: on a certain occasion, Charles was walking through a field of flowers. He was aware that despite their loveliness, these flowers would soon wither and die. At this point, he realised that other things the world valued—women, horses and military glory—were also temporary, and resolved to devote the remainder of his life to seeking heavenly treasures.[17] Shortly after this vision, Charles entered Himmerode as a monk.

From his earliest days, a second Villers knight, Gobertus of Aspremont, had enjoyed the privileges and hardships associated with nobility. He was born to the house of Aspremont,

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15. Twelfth- and thirteenth-century hagiographers were often less interested in matters of class than their predecessors were (Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, pp. 8-10). However, the subjects' social origins were significant in the composition of the *vitae* of the Villers knights.

16. VCV c. 2, par. 7-9, pp. 977-78. Cf. VPB bk. 1, par. 12-16, cc. 233-236; VIC bk. 1, c. 14-15, pp. 268-73.

17. VCV c.1, par. 2, p. 977. Cf. Thomas of Celano, *Vita Prima Sanctus Franciscus*, par. 3.

which held power in the southern Low Countries, from Aspremont through Dun-sur-la-Meuse.[18] His hagiographer tells us that Gobertus was the second son; however, because of his extraordinary strength and military prowess, he became heir to his father's estate and title.[19] From childhood, Gobertus lived a Christ-like existence, yet, as is evident from the discussion in Chapter One, he was very much a part of the world. Although Gobertus' early life was far from sinful, it was centred on worldly concerns and fulfilling his earthly duties rather than on the kingdom of God.

The *vita Goberti* portrays the beginning of Gobertus' religious life as a decision to make an armed pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Gobertus had heard tales of the infidel laying claim to holy places and was outraged by the horrors that his fellow Christians had to witness daily.[20] Gobertus felt that it was his duty to both God and his earthly brethren to help in any way possible: he had been given gifts of military strength, and decided to use these gifts in the Lord's service. As crusading fervour was strong in the Southern Low Countries and Gobertus was known for both his military prowess and his righteousness, his decision was not surprising. While on crusade, Gobertus realised that living as a devout layman was not enough, and through his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, he was led to the Cistercian Order where his progress towards God continued. As is the case with Arnulfus and Simon, the initial contrition that led Charles and Gobertus to the religious life was no more than the beginning of a journey.

The idea of conversion as a continual progression is clearly illustrated in the *vitae* of those men who yearned for holiness from their childhood.[21] This was not a popular model

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18. VGA bk. 1, c. 1, par. 1, p. 379.

19. His older brother, Iohannes, who should rightfully have been heir, also gained more political power than fate had assigned him. Iohannes became bishop of Verdun and the Metz, and the lords of Aspremont were his vassals.

20. VGA bk. 1, c. 1, par. 15, pp. 379-80; ibid, bk. 1, c. 1, par. 19, p. 381.

21. This pattern had been common in the earlier Middle Ages see, Vauchez, "Saints admirable," pp. 56-57.

in monastic hagiography from the high Middle Ages, primarily because new and popular religious orders, such as the Cistercians, discouraged oblation.[22] The strictures on children entering the monastic life ensured that those individuals drawn to traditional monastic life spend their childhood and adolescence in some other manner and "convert" in their late adolescence or early adulthood. Women's religious movements in Liège at the beginning of the thirteenth century were often semi-religious in character. Because semi-religious movements were less regulated than monastic orders, semi-religious houses were less likely to be concerned with matters such as the age of new members. For this reason, it should come as no surprise that the pattern of post adolescent conversion is statistically more common in the *vitae* of holy men than their female contemporaries. The Villers saints whose *vitae* correspond to this model are Abundus of Huy, Godefridus Pachomius and Godefridus the Sacristan.

As these saints were uncommonly pious from the outset of their *vitae*, one would not expect to speak of their journey of conversion. However, a close examination of their *vitae* shows that their seemingly innate holiness deepened throughout their lives.[23] The model, discussed here in relation to *vitae* of Abundus and the two Godefridus portrays a journey of conversion from a spirituality that is centred on familial desire, to one that is personal and centred on God.

The early devotional lives of the Villers precocious saints can be directly linked to their family background. The young Abundus felt drawn to the Church through his early pious education which his mother arranged with the canons of St. Gertrude. When Abundus expressed a desire to participate in the life of the religious community, it would

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22. The Cistercian Order frequently reasserted its prohibition against accepting oblates. Although this tells us that there were enough underage novices to be problematic, it also reveals that the order never developed a system of oblation and never developed official guidelines for dealing with children.

23. This model occurs frequently in the hagiography of the earlier Middle Ages. See, J. Picard, "Saints dans l'Église latine," DS vol. 13, cc. 207-12.

have been as pleasing to his mother and teachers as to God. The *vita Abundi* gives considerable evidence that Abundus' early religious behaviour was supported by his mother: it was she who sewed his first alb and who encouraged his early attendance at the religious services offered at his school.[24]

Similarly, Godefridus Pachomius came from a religious family. His parents encouraged his early religious behaviour. Both his parents taught him to pray, and the family prayed together regularly. His mother taught him to venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary.[25] The *vita* of Godefridus the Sacristan gives no information about his childhood. However, it suggests that Godefridus' family had considerable connections with the Benedictine house where he began his religious life. The *vita Godefridi* tells us that Godefridus' father facilitated his initial entry to the monastery and that he was personally acquainted with the abbot.

The moment in these *vitae* which marks the point of initial contrition is the moment at which Godefridus Pachomius and Abundus made independent decisions to enter religious life and Godefridus the Sacristan chose to leave St. Pantathelon and enter Villers. In the *vita Abundi*, we are told that during the year that preceded Abundus' entry in Villers he had begun to attend Mass regularly and to spend time secretly in the church.[26] During this time, Abundus began to listen to the inward voice of the spirit, and eventually, without the intervention of his family, heard the call to religious life.

Godefridus Pachomius' family encouraged his religious vocation, but neither tried to direct nor control it. In the *vita* of Godefridus Pachomius, there is neither any mention of familial opposition to the Cistercian life nor any mention of his being pushed towards it. Godefridus found the house of Villers on his own initiative and later in the *vita* his father also entered the Villers community.

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24. VAB c. 1-2. pp. 13-14.

25. VGP c. 1, pp. 263-64. Cf. VIC bk. 1, c. 2, p. 259; Moreau, *L'abbaye*, p. 98.

26. VAB c. 3, p. 14.

Godefridus the Sacristan began his religious life among the Benedictines at his father's behest. Initially, he pleased his father by strengthening his political ties and satisfied his abbot by fulfilling practical duties. However, it was not long before Godefridus was distressed by moral transgressions by his community: women were sleeping in the cloister and the Divine Office was not said with any regularity.[27] Although he had both been able to fulfil familial expectations and enjoy a life of comfort among the Benedictines, he soon came to believe that it was more important to please God. Soon afterwards, he made an independent decision to leave his community and join the Cistercian Order.[28] As is detailed below, the point at which these men entered the Cistercians was not the end of their spiritual growth. Instead, Abundus and the two Godefridus continued to progress in holiness throughout their *vitae*.

Stage Two—Purgation: Desire for heaven was only the beginning. After the Villers saints had acknowledged their vocation it was still necessary for them to change their lives in a way that showed their acceptance of the call to convert. In the Villers *vitae* and contemporary hagiography, the period between a saint's initial desire for the religious life and the time when a saint was publicly recognised as a mouthpiece for the divine was typically marked by a period of preparation. During this period, the saints either carried out physical penance for the sins they committed while on earth, or engaged in physical service, generally good works or physical asceticism, intended to facilitate the coming of the Kingdom. The discussion that follows illustrates the ways in which this period of purgation is portrayed in the Villers *vitae*.

In the high Middle Ages sin and redemption began to be viewed in mercantile terms: sin was denying God what he was rightfully owed; to restore the balance it was necessary

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27. VGP par. 4, p. 265.

28. VGS c. 1, par. 1-2, p. 534.

that satisfaction be made.[29] Repaying the debt of sin, both in their own lives and for the sake of the surrounding community was a primary goal of many saints, including some of the Villers brothers. Saints who felt sin and redemption were a matter of concern often engaged in acts of self-torture which constituted a kind of lived purgatory.

The "purgatories" portrayed in the hagiography of the high Middle Ages seem as harsh as anything that could be demanded of sinners in the afterlife. Saints were portrayed living lives of poverty, fasting to excess, flagellating their flesh and tormenting themselves in fire and water. In the Villers *vitae*, Nicholaos scourged his flesh until it turned black.[30] Simon spent long vigils in prayer.[31] Petrus restricted himself to a diet of bread and water during Lent.[32] Arnulfus mortified his flesh with ropes; tortured himself with chains; spent nights without sleep; and wore a vest that he fashioned from the pelts of hedgehogs.[33] At least in the case of Arnulfus, the salvific intent of such actions was recognised by his contemporaries. A certain monk came to Mellemont seeking Arnulfus, only to be told that he was "in his purgatory." The monk sought Arnulfus, and found him drenched in blood and scourging his flesh for the good of humanity.[34]

The purgative qualities of physical asceticism are well documented. However, less scholarly attention has been devoted to other forms of religious behaviour, which ha-

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29. Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory*, pp. 2-7; Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 201-02; Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, pp. 153-57; Brian Patrick McGuire, "Purgatory, the Communion of Saints and Medieval Change," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 20 (1989): 63-65.

30. VNC par. 5, p. 279. Cf. Peter Damian, "Vita B. Dominici," c. 2, par. 13, p. 625.

31. VSA f. 211 r, par. 6. Other holy men engaged in harsh ascetic practices in this period. Werricus of Aulne used to whip his flesh and wear a tight cord beneath his clothing (VWA p. 454 (scourge); B. R. 1047 f. 77r-v (cord)). Henry Suso, among other torments, wore a studded cross and often whipped his flesh until it bled (*Life of the Servant*, cc. 15-18, pp. 87-93). Francis of Assisi renounced his father's wealth to live a life of extreme poverty. Dodo of Hascha regularly fasted, went without sleep and wore rough garments ("De B. Dodone de Hascha," par. 3, p. 857).

32. VPV f. 87v. Cf. *vita Petri*, Bruges 425 f. 98r.

33. VAR bk. 1, c. 2, par. 14-16, pp. 611-12. Cf. Peter Damian, "Vita B. Dominici," c. 1, par. 7-10, p. 623; "De B. Dodone de Hascha," par. 3, p. 857.

34. VAR bk. 1, c. 2, par. 13, p. 611.

giography portrays as either making satisfaction for the sins of a saint's early life or as preparation for the contemplative life. The *vitae* of the Villers brothers who had spent time as knights present a unique model of purgative religious behaviour. Like the *vitae* of penitent sinners, the physical body is central in the Villers knights' stage of purgation. Gobertus' *vita* explicitly praises his strength and skill at arms and the *vita Walthurii* leaves no doubt that it was through his extreme physical skill at tournaments that Walter was able to honour the Mother of God. In particular, the verse-life of Walter praises Walter's noble background and skill as a soldier.[35] In addition to bodily expressions of knightly service, the *vitae* of the former knights often portray other physical expressions of devotion to illustrate their subjects' true repentance.

As is mentioned above, Gobertus had left his wife, children, and wealth to enter Villers.[36] Despite the radical nature of this change, Gobertus felt that he had to go further to prove his dedication. The *vita Goberti* details his acts of penance, excessive fasting, vigils, wearing rough clothing and spending hours in prayer.[37] Whereas in his military days he had served God through using his physical talents, Gobertus now became a model of somatic penitence. Despite the overwhelming support in Western Europe for the crusading effort, some theologians still viewed shedding blood as somewhat incongruous with the Christian life.[38] By drawing attention to Gobertus' penitential activities, his hagiographer showed that Gobertus had made satisfaction for any sins committed during his military life.

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35. BR 01780-01781 ff. 78r-79v.

36. Gobertus professed as a choir monk despite evidence that he was unlettered. This is further evidence against the idea that literacy was the divide between *conversi* and choir monks (VGA bk. 2, c. 3, par. 60). Cf. Newman, "Crucified by the Virtues," pp. 182-209.

37. VGA bk. 2, c. 2, par. 47, p. 386. Cf. 1 Cor 9: 27.

38. There were cries for returning crusaders, like any soldiers, to be denied the sacraments until they had done penance for the blood they had spilled (Leclercq, appendix to "Conversion to the Monastic Life," pp. 230-32). Even Bernard, whose praise for crusaders is well established, had, in a specific instance, spoken against priests bearing arms (Bernard, Epist. 103, cc. 371-72).

In Charles' *vita,* the second stage of the spiritual journey is less connected with the physical body than in the *life* of Gobertus, but is intrinsically linked to the physical rather than the contemplative realm; specifically, Charles cared for the physical surroundings of Villers. Charles had entered the Order intending to spend his life in contemplative prayer, but the Lord had other plans. Almost immediately after entering the Cistercians, Charles was sent from Himmerode to become the abbot of Villers, where he dedicated himself to ensuring the growth of the monastery. Under Charles' influence, Villers grew from a tiny house of twelve men to a thriving community of over three hundred. Charles expanded the system of granges, organised the lay brotherhood and replaced the straw buildings in both the abbey and on the granges with buildings of stone.[39] At the same time, he drew upon his vast network of social and political connections to earn Villers an influential place in the spiritual, economic and political milieu of the thirteenth-century Low Countries.[40]

In relation to the role of the physical body, the lives of saints such as Simon and Arnulfus changed drastically upon entering the Cistercian Order. The same is not true for the men who had been knights. In the case of the former knights, the hagiographers had generally emphasised the saint's physicality throughout the *vita.*[41] As in Chapter One, the *vita Goberti* records that although Gobertus was Count Geoffrey's second son, his physical strength was such that Geoffrey saw fit to make him heir and Walter earned respect while in the secular world on account of his military prowess. Rather than adopting a new form of devotion expressed through the body, the Villers knights simply continued to use the somatic gifts which had won them glory in their earlier lives; however, now these gifts were explicitly placed at the service of heaven. The call

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39. CV cc. 1315-16.

40. VCV c. 3, par. 12-19, pp. 978-79. Cf. VPB bk. 1, par. 12-16, cc. 233-236; Moreau, *L'abbaye*, pp. 17-39, 43-48; Cawley, "Four Abbots," pp. 299-327.

41. Modern scholarship often associates physicality with the devotional practices of female saints. The gendered aspects of corporeal devotion are discussed in Chapter Four.

to conversion, as experienced by Gobertus and Charles merely involved changing the intent of the activities they followed in their daily lives: that is, it involved endeavouring to make good works result from his knightly deeds.[42] It is significant that the *vitae* of both former knights and penitent sinners, the body became the principal means by which the saint endeavoured to reach the divine.[43]

In the *vitae* of those men who had desired holiness since childhood the second stage of the spiritual journey is portrayed as a time of separation and intense suffering, though here, the agony is psychological rather than physical. Godefridus the Sacristan was required to separate from his community and risk the disapproval of his father; Abundus was tormented by Satan, who made lewd suggestions while appearing in the form of a beautiful naked woman.[44] It is no wonder that Godefridus felt exceedingly lonely and Abundus began to perceive the world as a place of misery. Both men found themselves in a dilemma, which could only be resolved by constantly renewing their commitment to God. As is common in later medieval hagiography, they were tested "as gold is tested in fire."[45]

Stage Three—Living Saints: After completing their purgation, the Villers saints gained recognition as being in some way friends of God. They had rendered themselves worthy of holiness through penitential acts and public asceticism. In the final stage, the Villers *vitae* include *exempla* which illustrate the extraordinary sanctity of their subjects, including the ability to prophesy, guide souls, heal, offer political advice, or show un-

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42. "...omnem fructum militiae volens in bonum convertere" (VGA bk. 2, c. 1, par. 3, p. 382).

43. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption Essays on Gender and the Human Body In Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), p. 237; idem, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 245-59; Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls*, pp. 118-21.

44. VAB c. 5, p. 16.

45. Wis 3:6; Prv 27:21; 1 John 4:1. Cf. VGP c. 1, par. 5, p. 534; VGA bk. 1, c. 2, par. 25, p. 382; VMO bk. 1, par. 40, p. 647. Cf. RSB 58 1-2.

derstanding far beyond their education.[46] At this stage, the saints were recognised as extraordinary. Individuals of both genders and of varied social and educational background sought guidance from men who were recognised as channels of divine grace and, in many cases, the Villers saints were exempt from ordinary social norms or even expectations of their religious community. In the final stage of the *vitae*, the Villers hagiographers related numerous *exempla* of their subjects' visionary experiences and prophetic abilities so that the audience of their *vitae* could not doubt that God gave these men special favour.[47] The gifts of prophecy and the visionary experiences that were given to these men will be discussed later in this chapter.

The saintly status which these men held after the second stage of their *vitae* allowed them to violate the norms of society and even the rules of their religious community. Though almsgiving was strictly regulated at Villers, Arnulfus was given permission to distribute bread and pork to the poor;[48] Simon, contrary to Cistercian custom, was offered the sacrament of ordination so that he might be able to grant sacramental absolution to those whom he counselled.[49] Some of the Villers brothers served as advisors to political or religious leaders, notably, as is described below, Arnulfus' advice was sought by the countess Blanche of Castille and Simon was advisor to the fourth Lateran council.[50]

There are many instances in the *vitae* which illustrate that the local communities recognised the Villers brothers as both holy and authoritative. In the second book of the *vita Arnulfi*, Goswin ceased his litany of horrors and began to portray Arnulfus as a valued

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46. Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 375-80; Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion*, pp. 39-41.

47. Blamires, *The Case for Women*, pp. 194-95. There are numerous such examples in the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae*.

48. VAR bk. 2, c.1, par. 1-9, pp. 616-18.

49. VSA f. 214, par. 16.

50. VCM c. 4, par. 41, p. 657; VLA bk. 2, c. 3, par. 35, p. 251 (common in lives of women). VAR bk. 2, c. 4, par. 30-32, pp. 622-23; VSA f. 214 r, par. 16.

and loved member of the community. In the course of his duties, Arnulfus was able to provide spiritual insight and counselling to those experiencing a variety of troubles. He predicted the moment when a poor woman's daughter would be free of the demon that tormented her, provided spiritual direction to men wishing to enter the Cistercian Order and chastised a number of clerics for their pretence of devout living. As Arnulfus had purged himself of the sins of his former life, his community began to value him and to recognise him as having particular access to the divine.

In the final stage of their *vitae*, the Villers hagiographers portray the former knights as having moved away from military expressions of devotion towards contemplative prayer. In these *vitae*, the journey is less dramatic than in the *vitae* of penitent sinners, and instead of the visionary experiences and *miracula* that characterise the *vitae* of Arnulfus or Simon, the *vitae* of the knights depict something closer to a combination of active and passive religious behaviour. The spirituality that Gobertus embodied at the end of his life combined the ideals of action and contemplation.[51] The "mixed life," as it came to be called, married the virtues symbolised by Martha to those of her sister Mary, an allusion that is specifically referred to in the *vita Goberti*.[52] There is no question that the path of conversion that this *vita* presents differs from the introspective ideal; however, as has been made clear above, both the Cistercian Order and the spiritual climate of the high Middle Ages accepted that the gardens of the Lord contained varied blooms and that the fruits of sanctity were diverse.

From the beginning of the *vita Caroli*, Charles' hagiographer insists that he recognised the contemplative life as ideal. Charles' initial call to conversion brought him from the military world into the house of Himmerode as a choir monk. Despite his yearning for a

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51. Giles Constable, "The Interpretation of Mary and Martha," 1-141 in Giles Constable ed. *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 66-67.

52. VGA bk. 2, c. 4, par. 67, p. 390.

life of prayer, Charles' hagiographer recognised that the transition from the military life to contemplative monasticism could not take place in a single step. Instead, he portrayed Charles using his gifts to benefit his community while he progressed on his journey towards the divine. As described earlier in this chapter, Charles' experience and secular contacts were instrumental in transforming Villers from a relatively obscure religious community to an important social and economic centre.

After expounding upon Charles' achievements, his hagiographer tells us that Charles was permitted to retire and to live a life of contemplation. Although it is not explicitly stated, there is no doubt that Charles would have changed considerably during his time in the religious life, if nothing else, maturity would have mitigated his youthful desire for constant adventure. Charles' almost circular spiritual journey shows that his hagiographer accepted a tenet of Bernard's writings: it is only through active service that one is able to attain the grace of contemplation.[53]

In the final stage of their *vitae*, both Abundus and Godefridus were called to act as intermediaries between the divine and the human realms. Both men were frequently charged with asking particular individuals to cease their sinful ways and both were regularly asked to intercede on behalf of their associates. The confidence placed in Abundus and Godefridus was not unmerited. Abundus convinced many people to begin a journey of personal conversion. Godefridus brought his entire family into the Cistercian Order; and both men acted as spiritual directors to individuals from both their religious and secular communities.

The *vita Abundi* tells us it was known that the Blessed Virgin appeared frequently to Abundus, who was recognised as her devoted servant. Similarly, Godefridus experienced

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53. "Alioquin delicato satis otio dormitare voles, sed non exercitatus quiescere appetas, et Liae fecunditate neglecta, solis cupias Rachelis amplexibus oblectari. Sed et praeposterus ordo est, ante meritum exigere praemium, et ante laborem sumere cibum..." (In Cant. 46, c. 2, par. 5, pp. 282-84).

some indication of the Virgin's favour; however, the majority of the visionary experiences recounted in the *vita Godefridi* allow Godefridus to gain insight into both the eschatological composition of the universe and the posthumous fate of his contemporaries. The precise nature and function of the visions that these men experienced are discussed later in this chapter; for the moment, it is important to note that visionary experiences were among the *miracula* that allowed Abundus and Godefridus to be recognised as saints.

As was often the case in didactic writings of the later Middle Ages, the Villers hagiographers clearly held the contemplative life as ideal, and portrayed it as a form of participating in the heavenly kingdom while still on earth. Nevertheless, they do not deny the integrity of the active life, which they depict as a necessary stage before reaching the contemplative ideal. In the *vitae*, contrition, active service and the contemplative ideal are necessary components for portraying an individual's sanctity. In *vitae* from the high Middle Ages, suffering has a transcendental dimension and it is only through physical asceticism or active service that contemplative grace becomes a possibility. In many of the Liègeoise *vitae*, the hagiographers portray the ways in which the skills from the saint's secular life were integral to his or her devotional life. The *vitae* are clear: before one can fully live a life of contemplation, one must first learn to be wholly in this world. Theological writers often applied a scriptural analogy, maintaining that one must be *wholly* Martha before one could begin to become Mary.[54]

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54. Cistercian writers embraced the idea that the only way to progress to the contemplative ideal was *through* active service. See, Constable, "The Interpretation of Mary and Martha," pp. 66-67, 116. However, physical service being a prelude to the "ideal" life of contemplation is by no means unique to Cistercian writers. In his prologue to the *life* of Juette of Huy, Hugh de Floreffe reminds us, "Cum scriptum sit experimento que dicatur, nemo repete fit summus" (VJH prologue, par. 1, p. 863). The life of Hermann Joseph (c. +1241) states, "Multis itaque dei electus, in officiis ad activam vitam pertinentibus, beneficiis sublevatus, per hanc enim ad contemplativam iter est ordinatum, *ut per laborem Liae ad Rachelis adscendatur amplexus* (VHJ bk. 1, c. 3, par. 13, p. 692).

Visionary Experiences

As is expounded upon in Chapter Two, messages from heaven have always been a recognised, if often controversial, part of the Christian tradition.[55] In the high Middle Ages, divine communications, particularly those transmitted through visionary experiences, were commonly portrayed in hagiography. In addition to reinforcing the subjects' connection with the divine, the inclusion of visionary experiences in *vitae* could illustrate that their subjects were respected in their communities or could provide divine sanction for disputed forms of religious behaviour. The visions recorded in the Villers corpus fulfil both functions. A close analysis of the *vitae* reveals that the visions can be classified into three dominant types: visions that instigate new religious behaviour; provide divine assurance or approval for a particular form of devotion; and show gifts of spiritual insight and foreknowledge. The present section provides examples, which illustrate ways in which this pattern is evident in the Villers *vitae* and discusses the hagiographic uses of visionary experiences. It devotes particular attention to the implications that the portrayals of visionary experience had for the monastic community.

Instigating New Behaviour: Visions that inspire or instigate new religious behaviour hold a recognised place in the Christian visionary tradition. The *lives* of saints and indeed the bible itself, are filled with stories of individuals who, like Saul, were invited to set out on the path of personal conversion; like Moses, performed great acts of leadership or, like the Blessed Virgin, played an active role in the salvation of the world. In the Villers corpus, a vision prompted Godefridus the Sacristan to move from Cologne to Liège and inspired Charles of Villers to enter the religious life.[56] In one manuscript tradition, Simon

55. Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices*, pp. 19-40.

56. VGS c. 1, par. 1-2, p. 534. The community at Cologne was established in 956 by the archbishop Bruno of Cologne, and maintained close spiritual and economic ties with Villers. (AGR 10966 ff. 4r, 12v, 13v; AGR 10965 1 bis). For a discussion of the Cistercians at Cologne see, Lefèvre, "Introduction historique," pp. 23-24; VCV c. 1, par. 2, p. 977.

became aware of his talent for spiritual guidance and Walter was made certain of the Virgin's favour.[57] These visions are generally unsought, and the resulting life-change is often, though not always, unexpected.[58]

The vision which inspired Charles' call to the religious life is described earlier in this chapter. This was far from unusual. Instead, the *vitae* of both Simon and Godefridus the Sacristan portray visionary experiences which guided these men to the Cistercian Order. At the time of experiencing his initial vision, Godefridus was unsatisfied with life among the Benedictines, and prayed that the Lord might direct him. The Lord answered his prayers and revealed the house of Villers in a vision. Villers lived according to a stricter interpretation of the Rule of St. Benedict than Saint Pantathelon did; yet, both its location and its way of life were familiar to Godefridus.[59] Godefridus followed the path which had been made known to him, and was able to make significant progress towards God.

In the Villers corpus, visionary experiences which resulted in the onset of conversion were normally "corporeal," that is, according to Augustine's typology detailed in Chapter Two, they were perceived by means of the physical senses. These were not always direct requests for change, however, they were generally unambiguous.[60] Once, while Walter was attending Mass, the celebrant noted a gold cross and a piece of parchment lying next to the altar at the moment of consecration. This paper read: "*Crucem hanc defer ex parte me, Mariae scilicet Matris Christi, amico meo Waltero militi de Birbach.*"[61] The priest

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57. VSA-M p. 133. As is made clear in Chapter Two, instances of the Blessed Virgin adopting the guise of one of her faithful servants are not uncommon. See, DM t. 1, bk. 7, c. 34, pp. 502-03. Cf. Poncelet, *Miraculorum*, n. 194, p. 257.

58. Peter Dinzelbacher argues that visions experienced by male saints are usually spontaneous, and generally mark the beginning of a new way of life, while visions in the *lives* of female saints are more frequently actively sought after and generally confirm a way of life which they had already chosen (Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur*, p. 229). Cf. Petroff, "Introduction," pp. 3-59.

59. VGS c. 1, par. 1-2, p. 534.

60. Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, p. 174. Cf. Schmitt, "La culture de l'imago," pp. 3-36.

61. "Deliver this cross on my behalf, that is on behalf of Mary the Mother of God, to my friend—Walter of the military from Birbech" (VWB c. 1, par. 4, p. 448).

waited until after he had said the final blessing and asked whether a man by the name of Walter of Birbech was present. Walter came forward publicly; received the cross and was told of the manner in which it had been delivered. Walter interpreted this as a sign that he was being asked to give his life to the service of the Queen of Heaven and her Son.

In addition to emphasising the personal holiness of the saints, the visions that direct the Villers brothers along their spiritual paths emphasise the holiness of the Cistercian Order.

The first visionary experience recorded in any of the Villers *vitae* almost invariably directs the saint towards the Cistercians. As the majority of Cistercian brothers would have entered religious life as adults entering would have necessitated a significant life change. Gobertus of Aspermont left his family and his position of considerable secular responsibility. Whatever his personal motivations may have been, as is described later in this chapter, his *vita* provides a concrete reason for his doing so: visionary sanction, from no less an authority than the Blessed Virgin. As is described in the discussion of conversion earlier in this chapter, a visionary experience enabled Godefridus the Sacristan to leave a vocation chosen by his family to pursue life among the Cistercians. As well as providing a reason for his choice, a visionary experience, which directed Godefridus to the Cistercians offered divine recognition that the reforms instituted by the Cistercians were pleasing in the eyes of the divine.

Reassurances: In addition to inspiring new behaviour, visionary experiences in the Villers corpus illustrate divine sanction or approval for religious behaviour that might otherwise be controversial. As discussed earlier, the changing pastoral needs caused by urbanisation created new options for religious life, lay, semi-religious and monastic. Within this sea of new opportunities for devotional expression, it was often difficult to discern between orthodoxy, heresy and heterodoxy. To facilitate navigation the role that Thomas Heffernan assigns to the hagiographer, "hagiographic interpreter," gained impor-

tance.[62] By recording devotional practices in a form that was widely recognised as holy and associating their subjects with saints from the early Church or even Christ himself hagiographers could promote new or contentious forms of religious behaviour such as suffrages on behalf of the souls in purgatory or the *cura mulierum.*

The norms of hagiography were familiar to medieval audiences, and thus, the genre was an invaluable tool in shaping the devotional climate. However, a *vita* was only effective if the hagiographer could establish the sanctity of his subject. By establishing the subject's sanctity in a manner which left no room for doubt, the hagiographer gave credence to any devotional practices carried out by or with the approval of the saint. In cases where the hagiographer did not believe that the mere attribution of a contentious behaviour to a holy figure could allay the audience's fears, the behaviour in question was often portrayed as being given direct approval from heaven generally through a visionary experience.[63] Such visionary experiences were depicted as bringing peace of mind to the subject of the text. More importantly, they would have the practical effect of providing some assurance to the audience of the *vita.*

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, certain behaviours laudable to the eyes of a modern reader did not necessarily meet with popular approval in the high Middle Ages. Former crusader knights who entered religious life were often looked down upon for abandoning the defence of Christendom and adopting the less arduous life of a monk;[64] saintly ascetics exhibited unusual behaviour which could, as easily, be inspired by the demonic as the divine. Though generally praised, even monastic charity could be suspect. Urban

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62. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, pp. 21-28.

63. Villers examples are discussed later in this chapter. Contemporary examples include the feast of Corpus Christi being given divine sanction in a vision of Juliana of Mont Cornillon (VJM bk. 1, c. 2, par. 6, pp. 445-46) and Jesus asking Christina of St. Trond to undertake penance on behalf of those in Purgatory (VCM c. 1, par. 6-7, p. 651-52).

64. Leclercq, "Appendix," 230-32.

monasteries, such as Villers, adopted strict regulations regarding the proper distribution of alms, so that finances were not used for less than respectable purposes.[65] As is the case with saints who spent their early lives in a less than laudable manner, hagiographers of saints who had engaged in questionable or controversial religious behaviour often affirmed their subjects' innate holiness and direct link with God through visionary experiences.

The first section of the *vita Caroli* illustrates beyond any doubt that Charles had extensive political power and social influence. However, secular favour did not necessarily show his suitability as a religious leader. To remedy this, the *vita Caroli* included an incident which showed that the worldly respect that Charles held was mirrored by the divine. Shortly after Charles had entered religious life Hermannus, a *conversus* from Himmerode, saw a white dove descending from heaven during the Office and hovering above Charles' head. This dove remained with Charles until after the *Te Deum* had been sung.[66] The incident of the dove was recorded in the *Chronica villariensis*, which had a wide distribution among Cistercian houses. In this way the divine affirmation of Charles' suitability as abbot would have been made known throughout the Cistercian world. At the same time, the incident is reminiscent of the gospel account of Christ's baptism in which the Holy Spirit made its presence known in a similar fashion.[67] As this tale would have been familiar to the audience, its inclusion in the *Chronica villariensis* drew a direct parallel between Charles and Christ. At the same time, it perhaps linked the brothers under Charles' care to the apostles.

As the reader will recall, the *vita Werrici* recounts that Werricus not only disobeyed Aulne's restrictions on charity, but also disobeyed the statutes of the Cistercian Chapter

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65. This was not merely a result of institutional avarice, but was necessary to prevent the brothers from succumbing to various forms of corruption such as bribery or paying for harlots. Moreau, *L'abbaye*, pp. 261-66.

66. VCV c. 1, par. 4, p. 977.

67. Math 3: 15-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3: 21-23; John 1: 21-23.

General on the proper treatment of *conversi* who had left the Order.[68] It should perhaps be a cause of some concern that a man who committed such blatant violations of the rules of his Order should be regarded and presented as a model worthy of imitation. In order to neutralise the more controversial aspects of Werricus' behaviour and to emphasise his saintly status, his hagiographer recounted an instance of a member of the community, curiously also a lay brother, witnessing an incident that emphasised his prior's holiness. On a certain occasion, Werricus was praying in the church alone after Compline, when an exceptionally brilliant light appeared that was shining with seven reddish beams. Werricus began to marvel at the light and to ponder the many and varied meanings of the number seven and did not notice that the incident was witnessed by a *conversus* who later revealed it to Werricus' hagiographer.[69]

It is significant that the *conversus* who witnessed the incident kept silent about what he had seen for the remainder of Werricus' life.[70] In the *vita*, the hagiographer offered evidence of Werricus' sanctity to his audience which had not been known to the Aulne community during Werricus' lifetime. This would suggest that Werricus' sanctity was established among those who knew him, but his hagiographer wished to offer evidence of this sanctity to those who would never have a chance to witness it for themselves.

Once their divine origins had been established visions could enhance hagiographic portrayals of holiness. In the *vita Arnulfi*, visionary experiences are used to emphasise the

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68. VWA p. 453. Cf. Statuta 1134, c. 16, p. 16; Statuta t. 2, 1221, c. 8, p. 2; Statuta t. 2, 1227, c. 3, p. 56.

69. VWA pp. 454-55. The Villers *vitae* mention the number seven on numerous occasions. Instances include: the seven joys of the Virgin (VAR bk. 2, c. 2, par. 15, pp. 619-20); the seventh year that Abundus spent in the monastery before his final profession was significant (VAB c. 6, pp. 16-17); Simon spent seven years in Aulne before he had merited a vision of the divine (VSA f. 209r, par. 2). Cf. VIC bk. 1, c. 15, p. 273. For a discussion of Christian mathematics and medieval interpretations of the number seven see, Frank J. Swetz, "Figura Mercantesco: Merchants and the Evolution of a Number Concept in the Later Middle Ages," in *Word, Image, Number Communication in the Middle Ages*, edited by John J. Contreni and Santa Casciani, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), pp. 393-99.

divine sanction for Arnulfus' somewhat unusual religious behaviour which could have as easily classed him as a victim of demonic possession as it did a saint.[71] Nevertheless, from reading the entirety of the *vita Arnulfi* it is clear that Arnulfus' behaviour was inspired by a desire to serve God. In the second book of the *vita*, Goswin recorded instances in which Jesus or his Mother made themselves present to Arnulfus. On each of these occasions, whether the purpose of the visitation was to reward Arnulfus for his service or to enhance his understanding of the heavenly realm, the result was that Arnulfus was so overcome by joy that he seemed to lose control of his body. His ecstasy was made manifest in that he clapped and danced, offered loud expressions of praise, or simply exulted in prayer.[72]

Mental illness was not as popular an accusation in the thirteenth century as in the modern age, but Goswin of Bossut was concerned with ensuring that his audience would be certain that Arnulfus' behaviour was not influenced by demons. To accomplish this, Goswin recounts several instances of Arnulfus' struggles with Satan. Once, as Arnulfus was engaging in his usual torment, a small demon appeared to him in human form. The demon saddened and weakened by Arnulfus' actions, attempted to knock his scourge from his hands. However, because of the meritorious effect of Arnulfus' penitential acts the same demon no longer had even the strength to commit this act of mischief, and fled in defeat.[73]

On another occasion, the master of the *conversi* reproved Arnulfus' afternoon vigil, as it did not allow him the rest that the *Usus conversorum* required for all lay brothers.[74] In

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70. Neither the vision, nor any mention of the body is included in MS. B. R. 1047 ff. 72r-81v. Curiously, where the edited text (taken from B. R. 4459-4470) gives an account of Werricus' vision of light (B. R. 4459-4470 f. 163), B. R. 1047 includes an extended discussion of Werricus' penitential activities (B. R. 1047 ff. 77 r-v). The fourth chapter of this thesis examines the connection between canonical status and prophetic ability.

71. VAR bk. 1, passim. Cf. VCM passim; Newman, "Possessed by the Spirit," pp. 733-40, 763-70.

72. VAR bk. 2, c. 2, par. 16, p. 620. Cf. VAR bk. 2 c. 3, par. 20, p. 621; ibid bk. 2, c. 2, par. 10-15, p. 619; ibid bk. 2, c. 1, par. 6-9, p. 618; ibid, c. 2, par. 10, p. 619; ibid, bk. 2, c. 3, par. 21-22, p. 621.

73, VAR bk. 2, c. 3, par. 25, p. 622.

74. UC c. 2, pp. 59-60.

keeping with his vow of obedience, Arnulfus retired to the dormitory to rest. As he was beginning to recline, Arnulfus was confronted with a presence that reproved his laziness and challenged him to spend the afternoon in prayer as was his custom. Arnulfus recognised that he was bound to obedience rather than to observe his vigil. He therefore concluded that the presence challenging him to do otherwise was demonic. Arnulfus commanded the demon to leave in Jesus' name, and spent the afternoon at rest. When faced with Arnulfus' commitment to his vow of obedience the demon fled in terror. Goswin's message is unmistakable: Arnulfus was in no way influenced by the devil. Moreover, Arnulfus' primary loyalty was to his monastic vows and that, in itself, was odious to Satan.[75]

As well as emphasising the holiness of their individual subjects, the Villers *vitae* also emphasise the holiness of individuals connected with the community. Many Liègeoise *vitae* from the high Middle Ages contain some reference to John of Nivelles, a highly respected cleric, known to and loved by all for his extreme generosity and his upright manner of living.[76] Despite his excellent reputation, John managed to attract malicious gossip during his lifetime, primarily due to his concern for the spiritual lives of Liègeoise women. The *vita Abundi* portrayed John appearing to Abundus after his death. In this vision, John reminded Abundus that during his life he had taken an active role in the spiritual direction of women. He had consoled them in times of trial and heard the confessions of both the pure and those who had engaged in lascivious acts.[77] All the while, John had nev-

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75. On one occasion, the *vita Arnulfi* records Arnulfus' praise of obedience. He describes it as the mother or origin of all other virtues (VAR bk. 1, c. 1, par. 10, p. 610). Cf. Cynthia J. Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart: Narrative Effect in Pictorial Lives of the Saints from the 10th through the 13th Century.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 179-85.

76. VMO bk. 2, par. 57, pp. 651-52; VAB c. 15, p. 27; VAR bk. 2, c. 5, par. 38, p. 625; VSA ff. 215v-216r, par. 23. A thirteenth-century cartulary mentions John as a benefactor of Villers (AGR 30 385/2; 30 385/6). Cf. Jacques de Vitry, *Lettres de la Cinquieme Croisade* ed. R. B. C. Huygens Brepols, 1998), letter 6, p. 136; Frenken, *De Vita Abundi*, p. 27, n. 63; McDonnell, *Beguines and Beghards*, pp. 40-44.

77. VAB c. 15, p. 27.

er allowed his proximity to these women to induce him to unclean acts and never allowed the fear of temptation to prevent him from persisting in his charity. John assured Abundus that as a reward for his ministry, he was now enjoying eternal happiness.

John's ministry, the *cura mulierum,* was perceived as necessary yet considered problematic. As is mentioned in Chapter One, both financial concerns and the possible threat of misconduct prompted the Cistercian Chapter General to discourage Cistercian men from assuming responsibility for caring for the spiritual needs of women's communities in the early thirteenth century.[78] In spite of this, the Villers corpus almost invariably portrays relationships between the brothers and women in a positive light. Arnulfus advised a woman whose daughter was possessed;[79] he directed the actions of a female political leader and gave spiritual guidance to a recluse. Werricus' prayers bring an easy birth for a pregnant laywoman associated with Aulne. Simon's counsel leads a woman away from a life of illicit sex.[80] In addition, the women often act as guides to the brothers. Specifically, as is mentioned in Chapter One, beguines play a significant role in directing the vocations of Abundus and Gobertus.

The vision in the *vita Abundi* emphasised the importance of John's ministry. At the same time, it reminded the audience that John had not incurred any stain from his close contact with women. The visionary assurance of John's salvation was beneficial to Villers. As is detailed in Chapter One, Villers also received frequent sanctions from the Chapter General for maintaining its links with women's communities. The hagiographer

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78. Statuta t. 2, 1227 c. 18, p. 59; Statuta t. 2, 1235 c. 10, p. 140; Statuta t. 2, 1226 c. 3, p. 48. Cf. Capitula c. 17, p. 123.

79. VAR bk. 2, c. 6, par. 52, p. 628.

80. For the paternity of women's houses see, Cawley, "Four Abbots," pp. 299-327. Until 1228 the lay brothers who brought bread from the granges to the abbeys often brought bread to the local recluses. For a discussion of the spiritual ties that existed between the abbey and local semi-religious women see, Jean-Baptiste Lefèvre, "L'abbaye de Villers et le monde des moniales et des béguines au XIIIe siècle," in *Villers: Une abbaye revisitée,* (Actes du colloque 10-12 avril 1996), pp. 183-229; Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 86-87.

of the *vita Abundi* wished to remind his audience that Villers' repeated "transgression," the *cura mulierum,* was not detrimental to salvation.[81]

In addition to providing support for controversial religious practices, the *vitae* of the Villers corpus also frequently reminded their audience, largely Cistercian monks, that the devotional practices of the Order were pleasing to God. Stories from the Villers corpus reveal that duties such as the recitation of the Divine Office, the celebration of Mass or the observance of particular feasts merited gifts of divine grace or visitations from the heavenly court. It comes as no surprise that the patroness of the Cistercian Order, the Blessed Virgin, showed particular approval for monks who were assiduous in their monastic duties. As is discussed in detail later in this chapter, several *vitae* from the Villers corpus recount the Virgin appearing in the midst of the choir, and either granting a gift of grace to those who pleased her, or joining with the community in venerating her Son.[82]

Perhaps most significantly, visions in the Villers *vitae* draw attention to forms of devotion, which were becoming more prevalent in the religious climate of the high Middle Ages. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, the fourth Lateran Council demanded that all the faithful receive the Eucharist and sacramental absolution at least once per year. Devotion to the Eucharist took on a new importance in the southern Low Countries during the high Middle Ages and eucharistic enthusiasm eventually resulted in the institution of the feast of *Corpus Christi.* In twentieth-century scholarship, eucharistic devotion was often considered to be especially characteristic of holy women; however, medieval sources indicate otherwise. Even a cursory glance through the writings of Thomas Aquinas or Bernard of Clairvaux show that eucharistic devotion was a primary concern

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81. Brian Patrick McGuire, "The Cistercians and the Transformation of Monastic Friendships" in *Friendship and Faith: Cistercian Men, Women and their Stories, 1100-1250* (Suffolk: Variorum Reprints, St. Edmundsbury Press, 2002), pp. 46-47.

82. Cf. DM t. 1, bk. 4, c. 30, pp. 225-26; DM t. 1, bk. 7, c. 18, p. 480; DM t. 2, bk. 8, c. 5, pp. 6-7; EM, Dist. 3, c. 29, cc. 1091-92.

to these men. Similarly, the Eucharist was important in Cistercian devotion. Cistercian lay brothers were required to receive the Eucharist a minimum of seven times annually. This is significantly more than receiving it only at Easter as was required of the laity in this period.[83] The numerous chapels built on Cistercian granges and permissions given to both monks and lay brothers, by the Chapter General for attending Mass in non-Cistercian chapels while on a journey or labouring in the fields indicate that demand for attending Mass significantly exceeded minimum demands.[84] The statutes of the Cistercian Chapter General include references citing the proper ways in which the consecration should be celebrated.[85] As is discussed in detail in the next chapter, the *Liber miraculorum* contains many *exempla* illustrating the importance of the Eucharist in the devotional lives of laymen.[86] The increased prevalence of eucharistic devotion has been explored in reference to the *vitae* of thirteenth-century holy women, but is almost ignored in the *vitae* or spirituality of their male contemporaries.[87]

The Villers *vitae* include incidents showing divine approval for attendance at Mass and place particular emphasis on participation in the Eucharist. Godefridus the Sacristan looked upwards at the moment of consecration and saw a beautiful and delicate youth above the altar. The ethereal youth stretched out his hands toward him and then vanished. As Godefridus received the body and blood of Christ, he felt the presence of that same

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83. UC c. 5, pp. 63-64.

84. RC c. 3, 7; Statuta 1157 c. 117.

85. M. Camille Hontoir, "La dévotion au Saint Sacrement chez les premiers cisterciens (XIIe-XIIIe siècles,") in *Studia Eucharistica: DCC Anni a Condito Festo Sanctissimi Corporis Christi* (1246-1946) (Antwerp: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1946), pp. 135-56; Peter Browe, *Die Eucharistischen Wunder des Mittelalters* (Breslau: Verlag Müller and Seiffert, 1938), p. 20.

86. Statuta t. 2, 1232 c. 3, p. 101. Cf. Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion*, pp. 41-53.

87. VGS c. 1, par. 7, p. 535. Eucharistic miracles are typically associated with feminine religious behaviour (Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp. 120-48 also 168-224; Vauchez, *Spiritualité*, 147-50; Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls*, pp. 171-74; Browe, *Die Eucharistischen Wunder*, pp. 21-31; Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, pp. 265-68). However, an examination of primary texts shows that this association is by no means exclusive.

youth in the bread and wine at the altar.[88] The *vita Simonis* recounts an incident in which the host fell to the ground during Mass. Simon was deeply disturbed by this and began to pray. As he prayed, the host flew into his mouth of its own accord.[89]

In addition to the eucharistic emphasis of the high Middle Ages, the Villers brothers and hagiographers would have been aware of and influenced by the thirteenth-century trend towards emphasising Christ's humanity. As discussed in Chapter Two, this would have been especially important because of the dualist teachings of the Cathar heresy, which presented a source of some consternation in the diocese of Liège. The Villers brothers and their hagiographers would have been aware of the potential difficulties and it is likely that this influenced the *vitae*. Emphasis on the Eucharist played much the same role as somatic expressions of religious behaviour. In contrast to the Cathar belief in the inherent evil of the physical world, the Eucharist was a reminder both that Christ had taken physical flesh and of Christ's continuing physical presence in his Church.

The doctrine of the Assumption similarly emphasised the virtue of the physical body and was also emphasised in the Villers *vitae*. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the doctrine of the Assumption was controversial in the high Middle Ages, and particularly in the Cistercian Order. The Villers hagiographers who addressed the issue of the Assumption were convinced that the Blessed Virgin was physically present in heaven and recorded visionary experiences which affirmed this belief. On at least two occasions, the Blessed Virgin expounded on why the feast was justified. As discussed below, the Virgin appeared to Abundus on the feast of the Assumption, both to enlighten him on the reasons for the feast and to show him where it was discussed in patristic texts. In another instance,

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88. VGS c. 1, par. 7, p. 535. Cf. VIC bk. 1, c. 8, pp. 263-64; *idem*, c. 10, pp. 264-65; Herbert, "De Miraculis," c. 3, cc. 1277-1280; idem, c. 21, cc. 1297-1289; idem, c. 22, cc. 1298-99; Exordium Magnum Dist. 3, c. 13, cc. 1065-67; idem, Dist. 4, c. 3, c. 1098 (sweet taste--habitually).

89. VSA f. 211 r-v, par. 7.

the Virgin appeared to Petrus and tells him in no uncertain terms that the day should be celebrated. There is no evidence that the lessons from Paschasius' *Cogitis me* had managed to raise concerns in Villers over the intrinsic truth of the Assumption; however, the examples from the Villers corpus suggest dissenting voices which the Villers hagiographers sought to convince with their tales.

The diligence that heaven showed in instructing the Villers brothers in their devotional life was mirrored in its concern for their other monastic obligation, manual labour.[90] The *vita Godefridi* tells us that after his move from St. Pantathelon to Villers, Godefridus was appointed sacristan. In keeping with this position, he assumed care for the linens, candles and other liturgical necessities within the abbey.[91] However, these duties did not excuse Godefridus from the ordinary obligations of monastic life, which included cooking meals and serving food to his brethren. The *vita* tells us of an occasion when Godefridus' duties included the responsibility of washing the monks' feet.[92] One evening while Godefridus was preparing to fulfil this duty, the Lord appeared to him carrying a basin of water. Jesus turned to Godefridus saying, "Sit, that I might wash your feet as you have previously washed my feet." In a manner reminiscent of the apostle Peter, Godefridus responded, "Lord, you should not wash me." However, the Lord responded as in John's gospel, "If I do not wash you, you can have nothing in common with me."[93]

In scripture, Jesus washed his disciples' feet at the Last Supper. He told them that in washing their feet, he was emphasising their responsibility to serve one another. This "*mandatum novum*" was a reality, rather than an abstract theological tenet, in monastic life. In order for the community to function, each of the brothers was required to serve.

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90. RSB 48. Cf. David Bell, "Is There Such a Thing as Cistercian Spirituality?" *CSQ* 33 (1998): 416-18; Berman, *Medieval Agriculture*, p. 41.

91. For the duties of the sacristan see, EO c. 114, art. 1-34, pp. 319-22.

92. RSB 35.

93. VGS c. 1, par. 5, p. 534. Cf. John 13: 5-9.

By including this example, Godefridus' hagiographer drew an explicit parallel between Godefridus and St. Peter. Perhaps more importantly, he illustrated that Christ recognised Godefridus' attentiveness to his monastic duties, and showed divine approval for them. *Exempla* of this nature would have perhaps inspired monks who were experiencing doubts that the monastic *cursus* was the most efficacious way of living God's will.

In addition to service, the Villers *vitae* extolled many forms of monastic life as being pleasing to heaven. As is required in the *Rule of St. Benedict,* the Villers brothers laboured in the fields to bring in the harvest.[94] On one occasion, the sun's heat had become blistering and the monks found it unbearable to work for long periods. As the master was of a kindly nature he allowed the monks to take frequent rests. At one such moment, Abundus took a few minutes apart from the community. As he was praying, two women, Mary the Mother of God and Mary Magdalene, approached the monks. After greeting Abundus, the Blessed Virgin approached each brother and gently fanned him with cool air. When she had finished, she blessed the entire abbey with the sign of the cross and both she and Mary Magdalene vanished.[95] Although only Abundus witnessed this vision, the entire community felt refreshed. The heat, which had previously been a torment, was bearable for the remainder of the afternoon.[96] This story would have reminded the audience that members of the heavenly court were concerned with their daily tribulations, and thus been strengthened in the knowledge that the life of their community was pleasing to God.

Teachings and Revelations: Saints were direct links between the heavenly and earthly Church and as such played an important role in their community. Popular recognition

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94. RSB 48.7. In the *vita,* Goswin specifically uses the word *monachi.* Cistercian sources discuss both *monachi* and *conversi* being involved in building monasteries, shearing sheep and tending vines (Statuta 1134, c. 5, p. 14; Statuta 1154, c. 4, 12 p. 57; Statuta 1160 c. 2, p. 71; Statuta 1211 t. 2, c. 4, p. 378); Cf. Herbert, "De Miraculis," c. 1, cc. 1273-1275; EO c. 75, art. 1-52, pp. 218-24; DM t. 1, bk. 5, c. 51, pp. 385-86; DM t. 2, bk. 12, c. 31, p. 320. Cf. Platt, *The Monastic Grange,* pp. 76-77.

95. VAB c. 14, p. 26. Cf. Lam 2:19.

96. VAB c. 9, pp. 25-26. Cf. Herbert, "De Miraculis," c. 1, cc. 1273-75

of an individual as a friend of God depended, in large part, on external signs of holiness. An individual who had shown prophetic or telepathic abilities was more easily believed to be holy than one who had led a life of private devotion.[97] To emphasise an individual's sanctity, *vitae* often included accounts of visionary experiences or other inexplicable phenomena referred to here as *miracula*. Hagiographic accounts depict saints as prophets who received miraculous knowledge regarding their personal lives, the state of souls or regarding matters which affected their communities. Gobertus and Godefridus the Sacristan were granted advance knowledge of the moment of their deaths;[98] Arnulfus was able to see that a widow's illness resulted from practising usury. Such incidents were almost invariably accepted by the community as miracles. By relating them, the hagiographers reinforced the idea that the saint was recognised as being in direct communication with heaven and as such, was a worthy model for imitation or admiration.

As well as the gift of prophecy, in the final stages of their *vitae*, penitent sinners often received miraculous knowledge. Godefridus Pachomius was allowed to glimpse the posthumous fate of his contemporaries and to gain a better understanding of eschatology.[99] Arnulfus, whose *vita* never mentions education, experienced a vision that allowed him to both understand and expound upon divine mysteries. During prayer, the Lord deigned to show himself to Arnulfus and to reveal the secrets of the heavenly kingdom, the angels, saints and even the glory of the Blessed Virgin. Arnulfus gives thanks for these gifts, but begs Jesus for a vision which revealed a "more exalted" truth. In his infinite mercy, the Lord could not deny his servant's request, and allowed Arnulfus to see and experience

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97. Suydam, "Beguine Textuality," pp. 169-71.

98. VGS c. 2, par. 10, pp. 535-36.

99. VAB c. 6, pp. 16-17; VAR bk. 2, c. 3, par. 19, pp. 620-21. Roisin argues that the similarity of these two visions supports Goswin of Bossut's authorship of the *vita Abundi* (Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 33-38).

the mystery of the Trinity, which he was then able to discuss with learned theologians.[100] Similarly, Nicholaos the *conversus* received miraculous instruction through visionary means. These *vitae* explicitly state that the knowledge conveyed in these visions both allowed the saints to progress along their own spiritual path and to educate others.[101]

The *vita Arnulfi* relates a prophetic incident in which Arnulfus' connection to the divine was both recognised by and useful to the secular establishment. In 1202, Thibaut III of Champagne died without leaving an heir. His widow, the countess Blanche of Champagne, who was known to be favourably inclined towards the Cistercian Order, inherited his substantial landholdings in both Champagne and the Holy Land.[102] Blanche's claim to her husband's lands was contested by Eraldus of Rammery. Eraldus believed that he was the legitimate ruler of the Holy Land and began an aggressive military campaign to regain control.[103] Blanche sought spiritual aid from a trusted confessor, Geraldus of L'Arrivour, who advised her to seek the aid of Arnulfus of Villers.[104]

After hearing of Blanche's plight, Arnulfus prayed that he be shown some means of aiding the countess. Immediately, he beheld a somewhat bewildering vision: a brilliant

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100. VAR bk. 2, c. 3, par. 19-20, pp. 620-21.

101. VNC par. 5, p. 279; VAR bk. 2, c. 3, par. 19, pp. 620-21. In addition to the Villers examples, the *topos* of miraculous erudition is found connected with the fourteenth-century monk, John of Morigny (Claire Fanger, "Plundering the Egyptian Treasure: John the Monk, his *Book of Visions*, and its Relation to the Notory Art of Solomon," in *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Manuscripts of Medieval Ritual Magic*, Claire Fanger, ed. (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998), pp. 242-49). I am grateful to Paul Williams for bringing this book to my attention).

102. Blanche was the daughter of Sanche VI of Navarre, and sister-in-law of Richard the "Lion-Heart." See, N. Donnet, "La fondation de l'abbaye d'Argensolles" *Cîteaux* 10 (1959): 212-13; John F. Benton, "The Court of Champagne as a Literary Centre." *Speculum* 36 (1961): 555-57. Cf. VAR bk. 2, c. 4, par. 30, pp. 622-23. For her connections with the Cistercian Order, Statuta 1228 t. 2, c. 7, p. 66, and passim.

103. Eraldus' claim was based on his marriage to the daughter of Henry of Champagne, who was also ruling in Jerusalem, see, VAR bk. 2, c. 4, par. 30, p. 622.

104. VAR bk. 2 c. 4, par. 30, p. 623. L'Arrivour was a daughterhouse of Cîteaux, founded in 1140. See, McGuire, "Cistercians and the Transformation," p. 39; Donnet, "La fondation de l'abbaye," p. 213.

white hen comforting and protecting young chicks of the same colour.[105] When Arnulfus asked for further clarification, the Lord revealed that Blanche would be relieved of her troubles if she would construct a *coenobium* for women who wished to live according to the Cistercian custom. On hearing Arnulfus' advice, Blanche ordered the construction of the house of Argensolles. Shortly thereafter, Eraldus was overcome with a desire for peace and acknowledged Blanche's rightful claims to the Holy Land.[106]

Arnulfus' visionary abilities were later instrumental in the founding of Valle-Rosarum. Aegidius Berthold, a wealthy man who lived in Liège and a particular patron of Villers, came to the monastery.[107] Although Aegidius had not announced the purpose of his visit, he intended to talk to the abbot William and to Arnulfus about the possibility of founding a new Cistercian house. The moment he approached the grange, Arnulfus greeted him and assured him that the new monastery, which he had come to discuss, would be pleasing to God. Aegidius was astounded that Arnulfus knew his thoughts and was strengthened in faith. More importantly, any remaining hesitation he felt regarding the proposed *coenobium* fled from his mind. The convent of Valle-Rosarum was founded in 1227.[108] By including such incidents in the *vita Arnulfi,* Goswin emphasised the influence that Arnulfus' visionary abilities had with the secular community.

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105. VAR bk. 2, c. 4, par. 31, p. 623. Cf. Matt 23: 37; Luke 13: 34.

106. This incident is comparable to Christina of St. Trond becoming advisor to Count Louis of Looz. In theory, a visionary was simply "an inspired vessel" which was filled with God's word. See, Patricia J. Rosof, "The Anchoress in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *Peaceweavers: Medieval Religious Women Volume Two*, ed. Lillian Thomas Shank and John Nichols (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1987), p. 135; Petroff, "Introduction," in *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, pp. 14-15; Blamires, *Case for Women*, pp. 194-95.

107. Aegidius was known to, and a patron of the Villers community (AGR 10965, f. 12).

108. VAR bk. 2, c. 6, par. 54-55, p. 628. Building a *coenobium* for women at the beginning of the thirteenth century would have required some forethought: women were generally unable to support themselves with manual labour and, particularly with the new importance placed on the sacraments, it was vital that they have priests to minister to their spiritual needs. The expense and responsibility of women's houses eventually became so problematic, that in 1228 the Cistercian Chapter General forbade the order to assume paternity of any new women's communities (Statuta 1228 c. 16, p. 68).

The Villers brothers assumed some responsibility for the souls of many members of their secular community. As is thought to have been the case with holy women, one of the primary concerns of these brothers, or their hagiographers, appears to have been pastoral direction, particularly guiding individual souls towards salvation.[109] The *vitae* of several of the brothers, Abundus of Huy, Godefridus Pachomius, Werricus of Aulne and Arnulfus of Villers portray their subjects chastising sinners by revealing the offences they believed to be secret. In such cases, the sinners were so astonished that their sins were known that they immediately began a path of conversion.

The *vitae* depict numerous instances of miraculous knowledge being directed towards the salvation of souls. As is discussed above, Simon was miraculously aware of the sins that individuals were ashamed to confess. Similarly, Werricus was aware of those sins that individuals wish to keep hidden. On one occasion, a priest approached Werricus for advice. Although the priest had a reputation for holiness, Werricus was instantly aware that he was in a state of mortal sin. He told the priest that his advice would be of no use unless he were to repent and do penance.[110] In another instance, a priest approached Arnulfus and asked for his prayers. Arnulfus stated that while he would be happy to do so, his prayers would have no effect as long as the priest persisted in his lascivious ways. The priest, who believed that his transgressions were secret, was so astonished that Arnulfus could see into his heart that he immediately resolved to spend the remainder of his life in the Cistercian Order.[111] It does not appear that these instances were a general attack on clergy. The *vitae* criticise corrupt priests rather than priests in general and saintly priests are the subjects of some of the Villers texts. It is also significant that the criticisms were

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109. Karen L. King, "Prophetic Power and Women's Authority," in *Women Preachers and Prophets*, p. 30.

110. VWA p. 455. Cf. B. R. 1047 f. 77r-v.

111. VAR bk. 2, c. 5, par. 38, p. 625.

portrayed as divine and delivered through men who lived a variety of vocations. The criticisms that were carried out by Arnulfus the *conversus* were no less shocking than those revealed through Werricus, who had been ordained.[112]

While he had not received the sacrament of orders, Arnulfus was recognised as being capable of giving spiritual direction and holding some measure of authority. In his *vita*, Arnulfus is depicted offering guidance to the semi-religious of Liège. As is described in Chapter One of this thesis, the *vita Arnulfi* depicts Arnulfus offering guidance to a recluse who was troubled about the correct way of dealing with her clerical student.[113] Similarly, Simon's gifts of spiritual guidance were famed throughout Liège. His gifts as a counsellor were such that, against Cistercian custom, he was offered the opportunity to be ordained so that he might offer sacramental absolution to those whom he encountered. Simon's efforts prevented a prostitute from killing her child, encouraged a young knight to enter the Cistercian Order and caused a man to cease lusting after his master's wife.

The above examples again emphasise that the words spoken by recognised visionaries held some measure of public authority. In *vitae* of saints who were educated or held significant political connections, this was not necessary. The authoritative role of such saints had a perfectly ordinary explanation. In the *vitae* of saints whose secular authority would have been established, the Villers hagiographers described visionary experiences which guided the saints personal journey towards God. In the *vita Caroli*, a visionary experience guides Charles to the religious life; however, his decision to improve the grounds of Villers was made solely on his own authority. The *conversus* Arnulfus on the other hand, allowed his personal spirituality to be guided by his conscience; however, Arnulfus' pub-

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112. This is shown in the *vita Werrici* through his fulfilment of liturgical duties such as preparing sermons, saying Mass and hearing confessions (VWA pp. 447, 455, 456).

113. VAR bk. 2, c. 4, par. 33-34, pp. 623-24.

lic acts that are described earlier in this chapter—guiding Blanche of Castille or Aegidius of Berthold—were a result of visionary experiences.

In the *vitae* of brothers who did not have access to education or were unable to receive the sacrament of orders, it was necessary for the hagiographers to provide justification for their public, often authoritative, role. In the Villers *vitae*, visionary experiences justify instances in which brothers who are uneducated either teach or speak with the same authority as their ordained confreres about ecclesiastical matters. Although visionary experiences were a way of gaining authority that was, in a sense, set apart from the traditional hierarchy, hagiographic depictions of visionary authority did not challenge the authority of the Church. The content of visions included in a *vita* had been selected, or at times fabricated, by recognised Church officials. The visionary experiences depicted in the Villers *vitae* often support or authenticate Church doctrine. It is also significant that the authority of the visionary Villers saints is intrinsically linked to the authority of the Church, or at times, to the Cistercian Order. As is discussed in the next chapter, this portrayal does not differ significantly from the portrayal of visionary experiences in the *vitae* of Liègeoise female saints.

Marian Devotion

As discussed in the previous chapter, devotion to the Blessed Virgin was characteristic of both the Cistercian Order and the devotional climate of the high Middle Ages. The Villers hagiographers illustrate the importance the Virgin held in their lives of the brothers primarily through recounting the brothers' service to the Queen of Heaven and Marian visions. The function of Marian visions in the Villers *vitae* is not dissimilar to the visions discussed earlier in this chapter. However, when viewed in conjunction with the extreme devotion to the Blessed Virgin that the Villers hagiographers attributed to their subjects,

these visions help to elucidate the role of the Mother of God in the devotional lives of thirteenth-century holy men.[114] From a careful examination of the Marian visions, and other examples of devotion to Mary in the Villers corpus, it is evident that the dominant roles of the Virgin in the high Middle Ages, the roles of Mother, Bride and Queen of Heaven, were emphasised in the *vitae* of Rheno-Mosan male Cistercians. As Marian devotion was so prominent in the spiritual climate of Western Europe during the high Middle Ages, the role of the Virgin in these texts should come as no surprise. The brothers' Marian devotion, which is discussed below, becomes both novel and relevant in comparison to the Virgin's conspicuous absence in the *vitae* of their female contemporaries, which is discussed in the next chapter.

Mother: In addition to her role as Mother of God, Mary was regarded as the mother of the human race. As Jesus was dying on the cross he entrusted humanity, symbolised in John, to the care of his Mother.[115] In the high Middle Ages, the Virgin's role as Mother became prevalent in popular art and iconography as did her maternal roles of teacher and protectress.[116] As a guide, the Virgin was instrumental in providing direction, invariably to the Cistercian Order; as a protectress, the Blessed Virgin offered comfort and direction to her children and pleaded for clemency with her Son, the Just Judge. As mother and protectress of the human race, she was also concerned with the souls of sinners and as is described earlier, often used her servants as messengers to effect repentance. As a teacher, she imparted knowledge to her servants.

The Blessed Virgin took a considerable interest in vocations to the Cistercian Order. Instances of the Blessed Virgin directing her servants to the Cistercians or enabling them to persevere in their vocation abound in the *vitae* of Cistercian men and in *exempla* pertain-

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114. Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 114-16.

115. John 19: 26-28.

116. Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion*, pp. 208-14.

ing to both men and women in Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogus miraculorum*. Similarly, the Blessed Virgin is concerned about the salvation of souls and grants her mercy to penitent sinners outside of the Cistercian Order. As is evident in the discussion that follows, this aspect of the Blessed Virgin is embraced and emphasised by the Villers hagiographers.[117]

Earlier in this chapter, the Marian devotion of Gobertus of Aspremont is discussed. Here, the role of the Virgin in his devotional practice is examined in detail. As is made clear in Chapter One, Gobertus was both prominent in the social and political milieu of southern Brabant and known throughout the region for his desire to serve God. Given his pious reputation and the prevalence of crusading fervour in the Low Countries, Gobertus' decision to venture on crusade was probably no surprise to his contemporaries. The same cannot be said of his subsequent choice to leave his family and secular duties in order to enter the religious life. The *vita Goberti* does not portray Gobertus' entering a new life as an impulsive decision. Instead, it is a carefully planned change of direction, guided by the Virgin Mary. The *vita Goberti* shows Gobertus' time on crusade as something of a pilgrimage. As he was freed from the pleasures and responsibilities of being a count and father, Gobertus had time to consider the direction of his life. Gobertus was unlettered, but able to recite the Office of the Virgin, which he did regularly.[118]

When Gobertus returned to Flanders the attraction that he had felt to the religious life persisted in his mind. As is mentioned in Chapter One, Gobertus did not arrive at the decision to enter religious life alone, but first consulted the beguine Emmeloth and

117. Similar tales exist for contemporary Orders, in particular the Dominicans. Iconography from the high Middle Ages suggests similar instances of the Virgin's concern for those in the religious life. In particular, the image of the Virgin sheltering members of a religious order under her cloak is common to the Cistercians, Carthusians and Dominicans. (BUA bk. 2, c.1, par. 19).

118. VGA bk. 1, c. 3, par. 26, p. 382; bk. 2, c. 2, par. 50, p. 386. For the use of this Office see, Judith Oliver, "Devotional Psalters and Beguine Spirituality," in *On Pilgrimage*, ed. Margot King (Toronto: Peregrina Press, 1993), pp. 211-34; Joanna E. Ziegler, "Reality as Imitation: The Role of Religious Imagery among the Beguines of the Low Countries," in *Maps of Flesh and Light*, ed. Ulrike Wiethaus (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993), p. 113 (Women); Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, p. 14.

then Abundus of Huy.[119] Abundus promised Gobertus that he would consult the Blessed Virgin. After spending time in prayer, Abundus returned to Gobertus, saying,

> It is here (in Villers) that God and the Blessed Virgin wish you to stay, because this is for you something of a land of promise, and from here you will be able to win through to the fatherland of reward.[120]

After hearing these words, Gobertus entered Villers, where he devoted himself to the Blessed Virgin and spent his life serving her Son. Gobertus' seemingly questionable acts of renouncing his familial and secular authority were thus presented as pleasing to God and recognised as such by no less an authority than his mother.

On another occasion, the Blessed Virgin intervened to protect the vocation of Baldwin, a young novice to the lay brotherhood. Shortly before Baldwin was to make his final profession, he approached Abundus and confided that he was unable to endure the daily *cursus*. Baldwin stated that although it caused him great pain, he was considering leaving the religious life and returning to the secular world. He was aware that Abundus enjoyed the special favour of the Virgin and implored him that he might beg the Mother of God to allow him, even once, the grace of seeing her. Still distressed, Baldwin passed the night in vigil. As he was reciting the *Ave Maria*, he looked up and saw the most glorious Queen of Heaven and Earth smiling lovingly upon him. In that instant, Baldwin was filled with such heavenly grace that he was able to persist in his vocation, and even gained a reputation for extraordinary piety.[121]

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119. Abundus was reluctant to give an immediate answer. As Gobertus was already a valued patron of the house his entry would have been extremely profitable to the Villers community; however, because of Gobertus' position, both as a powerful noble and head of a large family, his entry to the religious life would doubtlessly be controversial. (Lefèvre, "Gobert, Seigneur d'Aspremont," pp. 5-6; Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 38-40. Cf. AGR 10976 f. 30r).

120. "Hic te Deus & B. Virgo Maria volunt manere: quia haec est terra quasi repromissionis tuae: per quam ad patriam remunerationis poteris pervenire" (VGA bk. 2, c. 1, par. 40, p. 385). Cf. Heb 11:19.

121. VAB c. 19, pp. 30-31. Cf. BL Ms. Add. 25053 f. 89r (similar instance in the short *life* of Petrus in the Chronica villariensis).

As well as her patronage of various religious orders, the Virgin also worked to bring about the salvation of sinners. As is common in *exempla* and hagiography from the high Middle Ages, the *vitae* of Arnulfus, Abundus and Godefridus Pachomius include examples of the Blessed Virgin intervening in the ordinary workings of the universe to allow a soul to be saved.[122] The most dramatic and detailed incident of this type in the Villers corpus involves Abundus' nephew, John, who was known throughout Huy for his tendency towards evil and love of transient pleasure. During Mass of the feast of the Assumption, the Blessed Virgin revealed to Abundus that John had fallen ill and was in need of his prayers. Abundus later learned that John had been overcome with a form of insanity and had spent the eve of the feast shaking violently and crying out that he was in hell.[123]

Experiencing a private hell had a tremendous effect on John. After he returned to his senses and as a direct result of Abundus' prayers, he repented and resolved to begin a new life. However, John died before he could put his positive resolutions into action. Abundus prayed that he might know John's fate and in a vision, saw John being swallowed up in a whirlpool. Greatly distressed, Abundus pleaded with the Blessed Virgin, and begged her to intercede with her Son to restore John's life so that he might live out the resolution he had made.[124] The Blessed Virgin was so moved by her servant's anguish that through the mercy of her Son, she commanded John to rise. This incident is in keeping with the

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122. VAB c. 9, pp. 20-21; VAB c. 17, p. 29. Cf. DM t. 1, bk. 7, c. 32, pp. 499-500.

123. "In ipsa autem vigilia Assumptionis valida correptus insania, totum corpus mirabiliter agitabat, ita ut vix a circumstantibus teneri posset, et a quarta vigilia noctis usque ad horam primam sequentis diei miserabiliter vociferando dicebat: <<Ego sum in inferno, ego sum in inferno>>" (VAB c. 16, p. 28).

124. VAB c. 16, p. 29. Despite new emphasis on sacramental absolution, the Villers hagiographers accentuated the importance of visible signs of repentance and conversion. Given the new importance of sacramental confession, the story of John, Abundus' nephew, is somewhat surprising. On his deathbed, John asked that he might make his confession. Although he confessed to a priest, and presumably received absolution, Abundus later experienced a vision in which he saw John suffering the torments of the damned: a theological impossibility had the sacrament been efficacious, however, the *vita Abundi* does not acknowledge this as being in any way problematic.

Virgin's inclination towards mercy. As didactic literature and iconography from the later Middle Ages give many examples in which the Mother of Mercy intervenes and gives a second chance to her repentant children, even those condemned by divine justice.[125] As the Mother of Mercy, Mary was concerned with the salvation of her children's souls; as a human mother, she was concerned with their emotional well being in the earthly realm. The *vita Abundi* relates an incident in which the Blessed Virgin comforted her emotionally distressed servant. As is discussed in Chapter Two, the lessons attached to the liturgical hours on the feast of the Assumption were typically taken from the *Cogitis me*, a medieval forgery believed to express Jerome's thoughts on the doctrine of the Assumption. As Abundus was devoted to the Blessed Virgin, it grieved him to begin the day by hearing "Jerome's" reluctance to make a definitive statement on a matter that Abundus knew to be an absolute truth. After the morning Office, Abundus began to wander aimlessly through the grounds of Villers, praying that he might hear an authoritative statement that would prove, beyond any doubt, that the Blessed Virgin was physically present in paradise.[126]

In his wanderings, Abundus entered a small basilica and found himself in the presence of the Blessed Queen of Heaven. After comforting Abundus, the Virgin began to enlighten her servant about the intricacies of the controversial Assumption doctrine. The Virgin asserted that she was corporeally present in heaven and that because she shared one flesh with her Son, it was unthinkable and unwarranted that the flesh of such a Mother and such a Son should wait until the end of the world to be reunited. She also pointed out that should Abundus desire a detailed discussion of her bodily presence in heaven, he should consult Augustine's sermon, discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis,

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125. See my discussion in Chapter Two. Cf. VJH c. 8, par. 24, pp. 867-68; Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, & Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 114-15.

126. VAB c. 13, p. 25. As is discussed in Chapter Two, the *Cogitis me* was a source of some controversy in the Cistercian Order as it was seemingly the only patristic source which dealt specifically with the Assumption.

which removed all doubt concerning the Blessed Virgin's corporeal presence in paradise.[127] Through the Virgin's instruction, Abundus was comforted; through including this incident in the *vita,* Abundus' hagiographer both emphasised that the Virgin was a source of comfort for the Villers brothers and expounded upon the Assumption doctrine. Notably, he was reminding his audience that the Virgin's corporeal presence in paradise had patristic approval.[128] Goswin's unqualified acceptance of the Assumption doctrine is evident in the *vita Abundi.* Given the controversy over the doctrine of the Assumption, even within the Cistercian Order, hagiographic portrayals of the veracity of this doctrine were of considerable importance.

In another instance, the Blessed Virgin appeared to Arnulfus and presented him with her infant Son. Again, the reaction that is ascribed to Arnulfus is simply one of pure happiness: Arnulfus clapped his hands, danced in circles and announced to the world, "God is here!"[129] The Blessed Virgin being a source of happiness for her devoted servants is mirrored in other Villers *vitae*: she comforted monks toiling in the fields;[130] she offered solace to those in choir; and she turned the water that Walter drank on a day of fasting into wine.[131] In each of these instances, the actions of Mary serve no other purpose than to bring happiness to those who love and serve her.

On another occasion, the *vita Arnulfi* describes Arnulfus' practice of meditating on the Virgin's seven earthly joys, namely: the Annunciation; the words spoken by Elizabeth during the Visitation (Lk 1: 42-45); bearing a child without pain; being a

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127. VAB c. 13, p. 25. Cf. Pseudo-Augustine, "De Assumptione Beatae Mariae Virginis," cc. 1141-1148. The words which the Virgin uses, "*corpus filii, et talis filii...corpus matris, et talis matris,*" are a direct allusion to those used by Augustine in his *De Civitate Dei,* bk. 2, c. 5.

128. For the importance on patristic authority to the Cistercian Order in the twelfth century see the discussion in Chapter Two of this thesis. Cf. Wellens, "Cîteaux et l'Assomption," pp. 33-36.

129. VAR bk. 2, c. 1, par. 9, p. 618.

130. VAB c. 14, p. 26.

131. VWB c. 2, par. 6, p. 448. cf. DM t. 1, bk. 7, c. 38, p. 513.

virgin before, during and after giving birth; the attentions of the three kings who came to venerate her Son; and Christ's Resurrection and Ascension.[132] Goswin tells us that Arnulfus' meditation was so pleasing to the Virgin that she deigned to show him an even deeper mystery. On a certain occasion, the Mother of God appeared to him and revealed that her joys continued after her time on earth.[133] These too were seven in number: being assumed into heaven, where her glory was such that it surpassed the glory of all the saints and all the angels; the court of heaven being lit with glorious splendour; being venerated as the mother of the King of Heaven; having her will be one with the will of the Trinity; having those who serve her during their earthly lives rewarded in heaven; having a privileged position in relation to the Trinity; and finally, that her glory would never cease and never diminish.[134]

Meditation on the mysteries of the lives of Christ and Mary was emerging as a popular devotional practice in the high Middle Ages; treatises on this practice, that is early forms of the rosary, only began to circulate much later. It would seem that Goswin's account of Arnulfus' experience was included in the *vita* to encourage and praise existing reflection on Marian mysteries among the Villers community. Goswin, in describing Arnulfus as meditating each day on the Joys of the Virgin, does not do so in a manner that suggests this form of devotion was entirely novel. Instead, he tells us that Arnulfus was *diligent* in performing this devotion, implying that the devotion was known, but Arnulfus' diligence in performing it was exemplary.[135] To support this, it is evident that repetition of the

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132. VAR bk. 2, par. 14, p. 619. Cf. VWB c. 4, par. 13, p. 449; Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, pp. 74-75.

133. The concept of the heavenly and earthly joys of the Virgin were often discussed in literature from the high Middle Ages, but were not formalised in any sense until the early modern period. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, various treatises recorded five, seven or nine joys of the Virgin. Cf. Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, pp. 74-75.

134. VAR bk. 2, par. 15, pp. 619-20. Cf. Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion*, pp. 230-32.

135. "coepit etiam beatae Virginis Matris devotus amator existere, piissimam *attente* venerari, et salutare frequenter omni laude dignissimam... studuit etiam, *quotidie sedula* meditatione revolvere septem gaudia..." (VAR bk. 2, c. 1 par. 14, p. 619).

Ave seems also to have been a common practice in Cistercian houses, and as is outlined in Chapter One, it appears that some early precursor of the Rosary was already in use at Villers in the thirteenth century.[136]

The purpose of this vision was, ostensibly, to relate the Virgin's seven heavenly joys; however, its inclusion appears to have a further didactic rationale. In a vision described earlier in this chapter, Jesus appeared to Arnulfus and explained the mystery of the Trinity. In relating this instance, Goswin describes Arnulfus seeing, feeling and experiencing the mystery of the three persons in one. Afterwards he states explicitly that Arnulfus was able to discuss the matter with learned scholars.[137] There is no such claim made for the vision of the Virgin's joys; instead, Arnulfus experiences a jubilation that is entirely personal.

Bride: As is detailed in the previous chapter, the twelfth century saw a shift in devotional language. The Song of Songs became a popular subject of exegesis and prayers began to take on some characteristics of secular romantic literature. Through sensual metaphor and the language of devotion, the Villers hagiographers give an unambiguous, if highly symbolic, presentation of the dedication the brothers felt to the Mother of God. Throughout the *vitae*, Mary was venerated as the most chaste Queen of Heaven. She was also portrayed as a beautiful woman who inspired the poetic devotion of her servants. As is the case with her secular counterparts, the virtues and beauty of the *domina* of the heavenly kingdom were praised by the knights who served its ruler. The Villers hagiographers used language and imagery that emphasised the connection of these men to the Mother of God. The ways in which the Virgin responded to chivalrous devotion varied, yet each instance results in her servant being given the gift of overwhelming joy.

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136. Repeated recitation of the *Ave Maria* was a common form of devotion in the thirteenth century, (VAB c. 19, pp. 30-31; DM t. 1, bk. 7, c. 25, p. 493; DM t. 1, bk. 7, c. 49, pp. 533-34. See also, Philippart, "Le récit mariale," pp. 578-80).

137. VAR bk. 2, c. 3, par. 19-20, pp. 620-21.

The *vita Abundi* makes a direct association between the Blessed Virgin and Solomon's bride in the Song of Songs. When she first appears in the *vita Abundi*, Abundus is fulfilling the office of *invitator* at Terce.[138] At this, Abundus' hagiographer tells us it was *as if* Abundus had cried out in the words of the Canticle, "*Ostende michi...faciem tuam, sonet vox tua in auribus meis.*"[139] On another occasion, Abundus beheld the Virgin in a small basilica in the grounds of Villers. Again, Abundus is overcome by her beauty, and his *vita* tells us that he beheld the "loveliest of the daughters of Jerusalem."[140] Similar associations are found in other texts: the *vita Arnulfi* tells us that when Arnulfus first saw the Virgin, it was as if his "inner soul so melted away."[141]

In addition to the poetic images, the *vitae* describe the brothers in language that emphasises the sensual elements in their relationship with the Virgin. Abundus, Arnulfus and Gobertus are each referred to as "*matris Domini devotis amator.*"[142] As is the case with secular love-lyric, the word "*domina*" is used throughout the corpus to refer to the Blessed Virgin Mary.[143] Abundus refers to the Virgin as "*domina mea dilectissima*" and the other Villers brothers recognise that she is his "*consolatrix.*"[144] The Virgin herself describes Abundus as "*dilecti mi.*"[145] At first glance, the simplest explanation for the erotic overtones in Marian devotion seems simply a direct inversion of the bridal mysticism that was common in *vitae* from the thirteenth-century and is discussed later, in Chapter Four; however, there are significant differences. For example, there is no instance in any of the

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138. For a discussion of this role see, EO c. 104, art. 1-16, pp. 300-02.

139. VAB c. 8, p. 19. Cf. Cant 2:14.

140. VAB c. 13, p. 23.

141. VAR bk. 2, c. 1, par. 9, p. 618. Cf. Cant 5.6.

142. VAB c. 3, p. 14; VAR bk. 2, c. 2, par. 14, p. 619; VGA bk. 1, c. 1, par. 6, p. 380.

143. VAB c. 16, p. 29; VAR bk. 2, c. 1, par. 9, p. 618; ibid bk. 2, c. 2, par. 14, p. 619; VWB c. 1, par. 1, p. 447; ibid c. 2, par. 7, p. 448; ibid c. 5, par. 14, p. 449.

144. VAB c. 16, p. 29; VAB c. 19, p. 31.

145. VAB c. 12, p. 24.

Villers *vitae* of a saint longing for the kind of mystical union with the Virgin that is often associated with bridal mysticism in the *vitae* of female saints. Instead, Mary is honoured in a manner reminiscent of the praises accorded to *dominae* of courtly love literature.

After examining the *vitae* which comprise the Villers corpus, it becomes obvious that devotion to the Blessed Virgin was widespread, or at least widely encouraged, in Rheno-Mosan Cistercian monasteries. The audience of the Villers corpus was encouraged to look upon the Virgin as their protectress and their teacher. At the same time, they were reminded that she was a woman of great beauty. Through her compassion and mercy, the Virgin served as comforter to the Villers brothers in moments of extreme distress. As was made clear in the previous chapter, these portrayals of the Mother of God do not differ significantly from contemporary *vitae* and devotional writings. However, as is discussed in the next chapter, the extent to which they, and even more traditional forms of Marian devotion, are emphasised differs considerably between the *vitae* of male and female saints.[146]

Queen of Heaven: The Villers *vitae* depict expressions of their subjects' devotion to the Queen of Heaven: Abundus and Arnulfus were recognised for their role as messengers for the Virgin. Walter dedicated his life specifically to her service;[147] Gobertus loved the Blessed Virgin second only to God.[148] When describing each case of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the Villers hagiographers were careful to emphasise that no matter how great their love for the Queen of Heaven, the Villers brothers were primarily servants of Christ, the Heavenly King. When the *vita Goberti* speaks of Gobertus' devotion to the Mother of God, Gobertus' hagiographer repeatedly states that Gobertus accorded worship

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146. Martinus Cawley, "Our Lady and the Nuns and Monks of Thirteenth-Century Belgium," *Word and Spirit: A Monastic Review* 10 (1988): 94-128; Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, pp. 141, 162; Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 108, and 114-15; Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, pp. 142-44.

147. VWB c. 2, par. 7, p. 448.

148. "Beatam etiam & benedictam atque gloriosam Virginem Mariam...super omnia post Deum dilexit" (VGA bk. 2, c. 2, par. 50, p. 387). Cf. ibid, bk. 2, c. 1, par. 39, p. 385.

only to God. Similarly, the *vita Arnulfi* states that through Arnulfus' service to the Mother of God, he hoped, some day, to be worthy of the promises of Christ.[149]

To emphasise the fact that the Villers brothers did not worship the Virgin, the *vitae* include numerous instances of the Virgin joining the brothers in venerating her Son. The *life* of Gobertus reveals that on the feast of the Purification, the Blessed Virgin appeared before the celebrations had begun. Like the monks, she took a lighted candle, processed to the altar and knelt before the crucifix before taking her place in a choir-stall.[150] The *vita Abundi* recounts that on the same feast, the Blessed Virgin appeared, and presented her infant Son to each of the monks individually.[151] The *vita* of Godefridus the Sacristan relates that during the vigil of the Annunciation, the Blessed Virgin entered the church and made her way between the choir-stalls, offering solace to each monk in turn. The Blessed Virgin being present at the celebration of feasts in her honour is only to be expected; that she is present as a *participant* is more puzzling. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw a dramatic rise in all forms of Mariology, which was particularly marked in the Cistercian Order. Despite this outpouring of devotion, the official theological position of the Western Church, which is illustrated in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, was that Mary was venerated and not worshipped.

The Villers hagiographers embraced orthodox Mariological teaching. Each instance of devotion to the Blessed Virgin recorded in the Villers corpus emphasises that the brothers express devotion to, rather than worship for the Blessed Virgin. They honour her as the Queen of Heaven, but their veneration results from their respect for her relation to her

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149. "...ut quo plenius obtineret Matris gratiam, eo facilius per Matrem consequeretur Filii misericordiam" (VAR bk. 2, c. 2 par. 14, p. 619). Cf. Litany of the Blessed Virgin "Ora pro nobis, sancta Dei Genetrix, ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi."

150. EO c. 47, art. 1-17, pp. 142-44. Cf. EO c. 110, art. 2, p. 310. For a discussion of this feast see, Chrysogonus Waddell, "Notes on the Early Cistercian Blessing of Candles and Candlemas Procession" *Liturgy* 25 (1991): 45-58.

151. VAB c. 11, p. 22.

Son. Although the *vitae* relate instances which emphasise that the brothers had a loving and often personal relationship with the Blessed Virgin, as is indicated in the earlier discussion of the Virgin as mother, for the men of the Villers corpus Mary was a source of consolation, comfort or encouragement on the often-difficult journey towards God.

The Vocation of Chivalry

The "vocation of chivalry" discussed earlier in the thesis, is evident in a variety of devotional writings from the high Middle Ages and played a central role in the Villers corpus.[152] As is discussed in some detail in the previous chapter, the *topos* of the *miles Christi*, which had existed since the early Church, gained a new popularity in monastic hagiography during the high Middle Ages.[153] Keeping in mind the social and ideological milieu of the Low Countries during the same period, it is not surprising that the Villers saints are portrayed as adhering to the new model of holy chivalry. That is, the brothers are portrayed as being devoted to the *domina* of the heavenly kingdom, defending their Lord's earthly realm, and practicing "knightly" virtues such as charity and protecting the innocent. In the Villers corpus, this new form of chivalry is epitomised in the *life* of Walter of Birbech. However, elements of the same can be seen in other Liègeoise *vitae*, predominantly of men, but, as is discussed in Chapter Four, there are elements of the same in the *vitae* of women. The section that follows examines the role of the *domina*, battle imagery and charity in the Villers *vitae*

Service to a Domina: From its beginning the *vita Walthardi* portrays a particularly close relationship between Walter and the Virgin. As is described earlier, Walter was devoted to the Virgin while still a secular knight. Even at risk of losing military honours, he refused to miss hearing Mass on Marian feasts and he made a point of wearing tokens in

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152. Little, *Religious Poverty*, p. 198; Morris, "Equestris Ordo," pp. 87-96.

153. Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion*, pp. 216-18.

her honour when competing in tournaments.[154] To show her pleasure, the Virgin bestowed blessings on her servant, notably she ensured his success in tournaments and made it known publicly that Walter's religious devotion was pleasing to heaven. Walter's love of the Virgin increased as he realised the significance of her blessings. Eventually, his gratitude to and love for the Queen of Heaven became such that he vowed to spend the remainder of his life serving the Virgin and her Son in the Cistercian Order.

The *vita Waltharii* does not portray Walter's making vows to the abbot of Himmerode, where he was professed. Instead, it replaces the required ritual with an extraordinary display of devotion to the Virgin. Walter entered the Lady Chapel clad only in a robe, and wearing a rope around his neck. He threw himself at the foot of the altar and vowed to spend the rest of his life serving Christ and Mary, the King and Queen of Heaven.[155] It is curious that a fifteenth-century manuscript of the *vita Waltharii* which does not emphasise Walter's Marian devotion as much as the edition used by the Bollandists, records this scene in its entirety. Despite the effusive element in Walter's Marian devotion, his hagiographer is careful to point out repeatedly that any honour Walter paid to his *domina*, was simply another way of honouring the Heavenly King.

As a child, Abundus had venerated the Mother of God in every way that was fitting. During his time in the Cistercian Order, this devotion both intensified and began to adopt some of the characteristics of courtly love. By showing the ways in which Abundus honoured his Lady and the way in which she deigned to grant favours to him, his hagiographer played upon the classic courtly relationship. Once, Abundus was so overcome by his love for the Blessed Virgin, that he begged to kiss her hand. The Virgin, as a caring mother, beckoned Abundus closer. He drew near, anticipating the joy that he would re-

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154. VWB par. 1-4, p. 447.

155. Cf. DM t. 1, bk. 7, c. 38, pp. 512-13. Cf. EO c. 102, art. 1-49, pp. 294-98; UC c. 13, pp. 71-71; Paulo Attavanto Florentino. "De B. Joachino Senensi," *AASS* April vol. 2, c. 2, par. 5, p. 457.

ceive from pressing his lips to her most holy hand. However, when he reached her, the Virgin bent forward and kissed him saying,

> Do not be surprised, my beloved, that I have granted you this kiss. It is not only another renewal, but also a way of showing you the constancy of the love that binds my heart to yours in holiness. Since I know how purely and sincerely the love which you show me is rooted in your heart, this is especially true.[156]

In his second sermon on the Song of Songs, Bernard of Clairvaux equates the process of spiritual ascent with the threefold repetition of *os*, in the song's opening verse, "*Osculetur me osculo oris sui.*" Bernard described the first stage as the "kiss of the feet" or "the stage of penitential devotion;" the second, the "kiss of the hand" or "the practice of a holy life;" and the third being the exchange of spirits or the "ultimate gift of grace."[157] In the incident related in the *vita Abundi,* Abundus sought to kiss the Virgin's hand, or by analogy, to enlist the Virgin's aid in achieving the second stage of the spiritual ascent. Instead, the Blessed Virgin kissed Abundus' lips, granting him aid in reaching the third stage, being united with God while still on earth.

Although chivalrous devotion is not as central in the other *vitae* from the Villers corpus as it is in the *lives* of Walter and Abundus, as was made clear in the earlier discussion on Marian devotion, it would appear that the majority of the Villers brothers were faithful to the Blessed Virgin, and held her in high esteem. It many cases, the Villers hagiographers refer to the brothers' various acts of devotion to the Blessed Virgin using language which equates it with knightly service.

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156. "Ne mireris, dilecte mi, quod tibi nunc osculum prebui; non solum enim aliis vicibus, sed etiam tibi nunc ostendi, quam indissolubili sancte caritatis glutino cor meum conglutinatum sit tuo cordi, presertim cum etiam noverim, quam pure et absque fictione radicta sit in corde tuo dilectio, quam exhibes michi" (VAB c. 10, p. 21).

157. When describing the stages of spiritual fulfilment indicated by the kisses, Bernard says: "it is a long and formidable leap from the foot to the mouth, a manner of approach that is not commendable. What then? Only recently tarnished with the dust of sin, you would dare to touch those sacred lips? Yesterday you were lifted from the mud, today you wish to encounter the glory of his face? By the hand you must be transported. First that [hand] must cleanse your stains, then it must raise you up." (Sermo in Cantica Canticorum III, par. 4). Cf. Matter, *Voice of My Beloved*, pp. 125-27.

The *life* of Godefridus the Sacristan describes Mary's appearance on the feast of the Annunciation. The earlier discussion analyses the implications of this vision for monastic life and its relevance to Marian devotion in the Cistercian Order during the thirteenth century; however, the relevance of this vision to Godefridus' spiritual life has not yet been examined. In Godefridus' vision, the Blessed Virgin made a circuit of the monks in choir and comforted them according to their merits. When the Virgin had finished her rounds, she quietly left the choir. Godefridus, having been drawn by a devout love for the Mother of God, immediately followed her out of the choir. Before he had travelled far, Mary turned to him saying,

> Return to your brothers and follow me no more. Because you have followed me with your whole being, for your labours and for your knightly service (*donativum militae*) you will receive a reward: the happiness of all saints in the kingdom of heaven.[158]

The *vita Godefridi* does not provide a detailed description of the type of behaviour that constituted Godefridus' *"donativum militiae"*; however, the hagiographer's use of this phrase, in conjunction with the diligence with which Godefridus is shown to have carried out his duties towards the Blessed Virgin throughout this *vita* is important.[159]

Battle Imagery: Most of the *vitae* of the Villers corpus include a reference to the subject as either a knight of Christ or as doing battle for Christ in this world. Before his move to Villers, Godefridus the Sacristan is described as living in a community of monks "soldiering" under the *Rule of St. Benedict*.[160] At the end of his *vita*, the Blessed Virgin promised him a heavenly reward for his "knightly service."[161] On more than one occasion Arnulfus is

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158. VGS c. 2, par. 9, p. 535.

159. It is important to keep in mind the attentiveness that Godefridus is portrayed as showing in regards to the lamp burning before the altar in the Lady chapel (VGS c. 1, par. 6, pp. 534-35). Cf. EO c. 67, art. 3, p. 190.

160. "Est monasterium Sancti Panthaleonis in sancta Colonia monachorum nigrorum sub Regula beati Benedicti Deo *militantium*..." (VGS c. 1, par. 1, p. 534).

161. "...recepturus tui laboris praemium, *tuae militiae donativum* & felicitatem Sanctorum omnium in regno" (VGS c. 2, par. 9, p. 535).

described as carrying out his struggle in the manner of a "knight of Christ."[162] Upon entering the religious life, Charles of Villers is described as "taking up the weapons of the sacred army."[163] The struggle that Gobertus of Aspermont faces in order to live a Christian life is described using military images throughout the *vita*.[164] Even the gentle Abundus is described as a soldier, and as belonging to a community of men who are "fighting for Christ."[165]

As is the case with Marian devotion, the portrayal of the saints as knights of Christ is not only confined to chivalrous appellations, but is also applied to descriptions of their religious behaviour. It is far from surprising that the brothers who began their lives as knights are portrayed as continuing in their vocation of chivalry; it is more unexpected that aspects of the chivalrous vocation can also be seen in the *vitae* of the other Villers brothers. The portrayal of the vocation of chivalry in the Villers *vitae* both reflects the twelfth- and thirteenth-century idea that the skills earned in military life could be directed towards a holy end, and reinforces the idea that monks were soldiers of Christ, fighting for his kingdom with the weapons of truth, justice, virtue and love.

As is described above, the *vita Caroli* makes it clear that before entering the religious life, Charles was an eminent secular knight.[166] Though his *vita* makes no mention of com-

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162. "...et *etiam milites hujus mundi praeliantur*, non contra seipsos, sed hostes suos: tu versa vice *contra carnem tuam pugnas*, et quasi *miles furibundus* ei *novum bellum indicis* (VAR bk. 1, c. 2, par. 14, p. 611); "Igitur *miles fortissimus*, perseverans in sancto proposito *impugnandi* carnem suam..." (VAR bk. 1, c. 2, par. 15, p. 611); "Cogitans autem *miles invictus*..." (VAR bk. 1, c. 3, par. 19, p. 612); "...adhuc *miles Christi* in *operibus militiae suae* innovare signa... (VAR bk. 1, c. 3, par. 20, p. 612); "O vere *bellatorem* inclitum et victoriosum!" (VAR bk. 1, c. 5, par. 37, p. 616); "Sicut enim milites seculi hujus, sine armis exire ad bellum non consueverunt; *sic miles noster ad pugnam spiritualem procedere sine oratione non consuevit*" (VAR bk. 2, c. 2, par. 11, p. 619).

163. "...*arma* assumit *sacrae militiae*..." (VCV c. 1, par. 4, p. 977).

164. These appellations are used no less than eleven times in the *vita Goberti* (VGA bk. 1, c. 1, par. 14, p. 379; par. 16, p. 370; c. 2, par. 19, p. 381; par. 23, p. 381; c. 3, par. 27 p. 382; bk. 2, c. 1, par. 36, p. 384; par. 37, p. 384); the religious life is referred to as the "militia of Christ" at least five times in the same text (VGA bk. 2, c. 1, par. 36 p. 384; par. 37, p. 384; c. 6, par. 77, p. 392); and other references are made to fighting (VGA bk. 1, c. 3, par. 26, p. 381; bk. 2, c. 1, par. 36-37, p. 384).

165. "Omnibus in ordine cisterciensi, *sub regula ac abbate domino militantibus*, frater quidam de Villari in Brabantia..." (VAB Prologue, p.11); "...huic mundo renunciare et in monasterio Villariensi *ad militiam se spiritualem accingere*" (VAB c. 4, p. 15). Cf. RSB 1.2.

166. VCV c. 1, par. 1, p. 976; c. 1, par. 4, p. 976.

bat, we are told that Charles perfected and gained respect for his diplomatic skills, which gave him considerable influence among his colleagues.[167] Not surprisingly, like Charles, these men advanced quickly in the religious life: by the time he had become abbot of Villers, Charles was known to and respected by the abbots of Igny, Hemmenrode, and Birbech; the bishop of Cologne and a holy man from the house of Stoorbeeh.[168]

In itself, this incident seems to be a direct allusion to Bernard of Clairvaux's renowned capacity to attract followers rather than being connected with the vocation of chivalry. However, it is important to keep in mind that Charles' hagiographer makes clear that it was largely *through* the skills and connections that Charles had cultivated during his time in the military that he helped his community to become a prominent centre in the southern Low Countries. Thus, the *vita Caroli* shows one way in which military experience and the skills acquired in the secular world could be put to God's service.[169]

Gobertus of Aspermont was a knight, famed for his extraordinary strength and military prowess.[170] Despite a prevalent belief that even the holiest of knights would have to account for his acts of violence on judgement day, Gobertus' hagiographer makes no apology for his subject's early life.[171] In fact, from the beginning of *vita Goberti*, he both praises Gobertus' desire to defend Christendom and the brave manner in which Gobertus fulfilled this aspiration in the Holy Land.[172] The second book of the *vita Goberti*

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167. VCV c.1, par. 1, p. 976. The second chapter lists men who were influenced by Charles' example (VCV c. 2, par. 7-11, pp. 977-78). Cf. VPB bk. 1, c. 3, cc. 231-37.

168. VCV c. 1, par. 3, p. 977.

169. Moreau, *L'abbaye*, p. 46.

170. VGA bk. 1, c. 1, par. 10, p. 378.

171. The appellations "miles Christi," "Dei miles," "Christi tyro," or "noster miles" are used at least ten times in the first book of the *vita Goberti* (VGA bk. 1, c. 1, par. 12, p. 379; par. 15-16, p. 380; c. 2, par. 19-23, p. 381, par. 28, p. 382, par. 20, p. 383). References to Gobertus' military strength or the number of men under his command occur at least twenty-one times in the same (VGA bk. 1, c.1, par. 11-14, p. 379; par. 15, p. 380; c. 2, par. 18-19, p. 381; par. 21-23, p. 381; c. 3, par. 28, pp. 382-83. The second book of the *vita Goberti* ceases to discuss Gobertus' military actions, and uses military imagery almost exclusively to discuss Gobertus' battle against evil.

172. VGA bk. 1, c. 2, par. 18-25, pp. 380-82, passim.

is an account of Gobertus' life after he has made a commitment to the Cistercian Order. Although it portrays a very different form of knightly service, it does not place any less emphasis on the image of Gobertus' knighthood.

The *vita Abundi* states that, "all who desire to live in a pious manner endure persecution."[173] After Abundus' first year in Villers, the ancient enemy took notice of his steadfast resolve to cling to the Benedictine Rule, and his manner of blameless living. As such pious resolve was inimical to propagating chaos and disorder in the world, Satan began to assault Abundus, at this time referred to as "*novus Christi tyrunculus,*" by battering his heart with all manner of illicit and depraved suggestions. When this had no effect, he approached Abundus in the guise of a naked shapely woman. At this, Abundus simply made the sign of the cross, which caused the demon to vanish.[174]

The first book of the *vita Arnulfi* portrays Arnulfus as both a soldier and a martyr. Arnulfus fought against sin with the weapons of his flesh. In doing so, he was both able to express his love for God through somatic means and to effect satisfaction for the sins of others in his own flesh. As is described above, Goswin details practices ranging from conventional fasts and vigils to rather extraordinary variations on the hair shirt—all practices intended to make satisfaction for sin, and thereby to wage war against the Old Enemy.[175]

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173. "omnes qui pie volunt vivere persecutionem patiuntur" (VAB c. 5, p. 16). Cf. I Tim 3: 12.

174. This motif seems common in hagiography, see, VPB bk. 1, c. 3, par. 12-16, cc. 230-31; VAR bk. 1, c. 1, par. 6, pp. 609-10. Cf. Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*: pp. 81-87.

175. On one occasion, Arnulfus reassures a concerned brother that his endeavour was not to kill himself, but to destroy sin (VAR bk. 1, c. 2, par. 13, p. 611). Cf. VPV ff. 88v-89r; *vita Petri*, Bruges 425, f. 97r. As is mentioned above, Arnulfus' *vita* is resplendent with military imagery: "*Pugnans* itaque de cetero *novus athleta viriliter*..." (VAR bk. 1, c. 1, par. 7, p. 610); "...et ideo nova adhuc illi bella suscitare propono" (idem bk. 1, c. 2. par. 14, pp. 611); "Igitur *miles fortissimus* perseverans in sancto proposito *impugnandi* carnem suam" (idem, bk. 1, c. 2, par. 15, p. 611); "Cogitans autem *miles invictus*... (idem, bk. 1, c. 3, par. 19, p. 612); "...novus *Christi tirunculus*"; "sub quatuor abbatibus...*fortiter Domino militavit*"(idem, bk. 1, c. 3, par. 21, p. 612); "...adhuc *miles Christi* in *operibus militiae* suae..." (idem, bk. 1, c. 3, par. 20, p. 612); "contra commodum corporis sui vir iste *pugnaverit*...(idem, bk. 1, c. 5, par. 35, p. 615); " ...revolvens *novum Christi militem* occultis..." (*Vita Petri*, MS Brugge/Bruges, Bibliothèque Municipale, 425 f. 97r).

In the high Middle Ages, defending the Holy Land was essential; however, it was generally recognised that Satan, even more so than the infidel or heretics, remained the primary enemy of Christ's earthly kingdom. Even the *vitae* of those saints who neither ventured to Jerusalem nor fought for their lady's honour in tournaments were portrayed as the new *milites Christi.* Men such as the gentle Abundus or the simple Petrus did as much to defend Christ's kingdom through their virtue as their contemporaries did on the battlefield. Crusaders such as Charles and Gobertus were portrayed as continuing to fight for Christ long after they ceased physical combat; their spiritual combat was, if anything portrayed as more efficacious than their physical combat had been. The images associated with the *milites Christi* emphasise that the vocation of chivalry encompassed far more than its literal dimension.

Charity: Throughout his *vita,* Werricus of Aulne is portrayed as a Christian knight. Although he is never directly given that appellation, Werricus' hagiographer makes this allusion by showing the ways in which Werricus was devoted to and modelled his life upon the quintessential *miles Christi*, Martin of Tours.[176] Perhaps the most familiar characteristic of St. Martin is his charity, which Werricus imitated in a diligent manner. Each year on the feast of St. Martin, Werricus would give away a pair of shoes to a needy person.[177] It was not only on this feast that Werricus would feel an obligation to care for the less fortunate, but he also made a habit of secretly giving away supplies from the monastery so that the poor might eat.[178] Werricus carried out such acts of charity with such regularity that even the horse he habitually rode through the town considered it a part of the daily routine. On a certain occasion, another man rode that same horse on Werricus'

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176. "...Martini modicum cupiendo sic imitari" (VWA p. 447); "Sancto Martino devotus erat vehementer, / Ipsius vitam recolens et gesta libenter" (VWA p. 449). Cf. VPV ff. 88v-89r.

177. VWA p. 449.

178. VWA p. 447.

usual route. The horse, accustomed to its master's habits, came to a sudden halt before the needy. As Werricus' charity had always been carried out in secret, the new rider, a monk named Alardus, was baffled by the situation. Soon, as Alardus observed the obvious familiarity between the horse and the paupers, he understood, and marvelled at Werricus' kindness.[179]

All aspects of Martin's charity had taken on legendary proportions, but the incident that remained most closely associated with the fourth-century bishop was his act of dividing his cloak in two so that he might give half to a poor man on the road. This incident was popular in hagiography from the high and later Middle Ages and is found in the *vitae* of both male and female saints.[180] Werricus' hagiographer found this tale particularly striking, and emphasised Werricus' charity and devotion to St. Martin by including several such *exempla* in the his *vita*.

In the first incident of his being asked for a cloak, Werricus, then prior of Aulne, was approached by a *conversus* in obvious distress. The *conversus* confided to Werricus that he had learned his mother had become so poor that she was unable to provide herself with a cloak. The distraught man went on to say that he was considering leaving the religious life temporarily so that he might provide for his mother until her death. Werricus listened sympathetically to the man's plight, but refused to release him from his vows. He then ordered a cloak from the monastery storeroom be given to the woman.[181] On another occasion, Werricus was travelling in the middle of winter, when he encountered a poor woman on the road. The poor woman looked up at Werricus, and cried, "Lord, protect me for I

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179. VWA pp. 449-50.

180. Devotion to and imitation of St. Martin is found in the *vitae* of female saints such as St. Zita or Catherine of Siena ("De S. Zita Virgine Lucae in Italia," *AASS.* April vol. 3, c. 2, par. 7, p. 501).

181. VWA p. 451.

am unable to clothe myself."[182] Werricus immediately descended from his horse, and gave her the better of the two cloaks that he was wearing. Werricus' repeated his characteristic charity with cloaks when a blind cleric approached the monastery. Werricus did not initially have a cloak to give the poor cleric, however, as soon as circumstance permitted, he sent a cloak to Baldribus, where the man was professed.[183] The final such incident involved a former Cistercian *conversus*, who had approached Werricus in a state of abject poverty as was shown by the fact that he lacked both a proper cloak and tunic. Despite the former *conversus'* transgression in leaving the order, Werricus had pity on this poor man and gave him new shoes, and one of his own tunics.[184]

Gobertus, the only Villers knight whose experiences of warfare are described, is compared to Martin not for his bravery or obedience to his leaders, but for his charity.[185] Archival evidence tells us that before beginning the religious life, Gobertus had been extremely generous to Villers. The *vita Goberti* gives reason to believe that this same trait was mirrored in his dealings with the broader community. When he had first ventured on crusade, Gobertus sold half of his possessions and gave the money to the poor. Before he was professed in Villers, Gobertus disposed of his remaining chattels in a similar manner. In specific instances, the *vita* records Gobertus giving shoes to an impoverished beguine; giving food to an orphaned child and a cloak to a widow.[186]

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182. "Protege me domine, quia nil queo vestis habere" (VWA p. 452). The word "protego -ere" has the meanings of both "to protect" and "to cover" (*Lewis and Short* s. v. *protego -ere*. p. 1478, col. A). In B. R. 1047 the woman's cry is, "miserere prior miserere" (B. R. 1047 f. 75v).

183. VWA p. 452. For a discussion of the way in which Cistercian hagiography presented those things that were unusual to monastic life, but which had positive results. See, Bredero, *Bernard of Clairvaux*, pp. 63-81.

184. VWA p. 453. For a discussion of the way in which *conversi* who had left the order were treated see. Statuta t. 2, 1227 c. 3, p. 56.

185. VGA bk. 2, c. 3, par. 54, p. 387.

186. The *vita* cites the words of St. Paul: "quis infirmatur, & ego non infirmor? Quis scandalizatur, & ego non uror?" (VGA bk. 2, c. 4, par. 71, p. 389).

Similarly, the responsibility of the *miles Christi* to care for the needy are made clear in the second book of the *vita Arnulfi*. It has already been established that the punishments which Arnulfus regularly inflicted upon his body were an example of spiritual warfare; however the reason for his knightly appellations in the second book are less clear. This apparent incongruity is resolved when one remembers that the vocation of chivalry had two components: battling against evil and defending those who were incapable of protecting themselves. Many of the acts described in book two of the *vita Arnulfi*, are in accord with the second aspect of Christian knighthood.

Although Goswin does not mention Arnulfus having a particular devotion to St. Martin, he tells us that Arnulfus resembled the saint in his charitable acts. According to Goswin, Arnulfus "would have been another Martin if he had not been restricted from charity by the customs of his order."[187] As a system of institutionalised almsgiving was already firmly established in thirteenth-century Villers, individual members of the community were discouraged from carrying out personal acts of charity.[188] Nevertheless, in Goswin's account, Arnulfus appears to have been permitted relative freedom in this regard.

Near the beginning of the *vita Arnulfi*, Goswin describes an incident in which Arnulfus has been given his prior's permission to take two pigs from the grange of *Novacuria* and give them to the poor.[189] As is typical in the *vitae* of the Villers corpus, Arnulfus was fulfilling this act of charity in secret. Before leaving the grange, he secured the beasts in two sacks which he tied at the openings.[190] As he was hastening on his way, the pigs began to grunt and squeal. Arnulfus turned his eyes to heaven and cried,

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187. "...se alterum Martinum, nisi Ordinis legibus coerceretur, exhibuisset" (VAR bk. 2, c. 1, par. 3, p. 617).

188. Cawley, "Four Abbots," pp. 21-23; Moreau, *L'abbaye de Villers*, pp. 261-66.

189. VAR bk. 2, c. 1, par. 4, p. 617.

190. VAR bk. 2, c. 1, par. 4, p. 617.

> Hear you pigs, and listen to my words! If it is displeasing in the eyes of the Lord that I, as I have proposed, offer you to the poor, you have permission to grunt as you have been doing; if however, it is pleasing and acceptable to my God that through my actions your flesh should satisfy the hunger of the poor, I command you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you cease utterly from this troublesome grunting.[191]

It is hardly surprising that the pigs immediately obeyed his command. They were silent until they had left the monastery grounds, and Arnulfus had once again given them permission to grunt freely.[192]

On another occasion, Arnulfus was secretly given permission to distribute forty-two loaves of bread to the poor. Unlike the incident with the pigs, on this occasion, his efforts to conceal his act came to naught, and an unnamed party brought his actions to the abbot's attention. As Arnulfus wished to be granted permission for such acts in the future, he and the abbot agreed not to disclose that the almsgiving had been authorised. Instead, Arnulfus publicly admitted his guilt, promised to make amends for his transgression. As penance, Arnulfus was required to stand outside the monastery gate. Although his punishment was unmerited, Arnulfus endured it patiently. He even showed his characteristic good humour by drawing a jocular parallel between himself and St. Peter.[193]

Martinian charity was frequently developed as part of the chivalrous vocation. Giving possessions to the poor was often portrayed as one way in which the new *milites Christi* fought against evil on behalf of the heavenly kingdom. Defending and providing for the needy was an important part of the vocation of chivalry, but hagiographic portrayals of those who fought for Christ encompassed much more than this. The knightly profession necessitated significant social standing and military training; the chivalrous vocation was

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191. "Audite porci; audite verba mea. Si displicet in oculis Domini, ne, sicut proposui, in usus pauperum vos expendam, licentiam habetote grunniendi, sicut est facitis; si vero gratum est acceptabile Deo meo, ut per me de carnibus vestris avida pauperum reficiatur esuries; praecipio vobis in nomine Dei nostri Jesu Christi, ut penitus ab hoc importuno grunnitu cessetis" (VAR bk. 2, c. 1, par. 5, p. 617).

192. VAR bk. 2, c. 1, par. 5, p. 617.

193. VAR bk. 2, c. 2, par. 8, p. 618.

open to all, but fulfilling it required continued fidelity to the path of conversion. Combat imagery was a powerful language in which to frame the stories of those who had once been knights; however, as the *vita Arnulfi* shows, the chivalrous vocation was open to all, and, as is discussed in the following chapter, its traces are even found in the *vitae* of female saints.

Conclusion

From a close analysis of these *vitae*, it is apparent that there is considerable thematic consistency in the Villers texts. Despite its feminine associations, which are discussed in the next chapter, somatic devotion plays a central role in the *vitae* of the Villers brothers. The Villers knights served God with their gifts of physical strength and prowess. In the *vitae* of those men who had never served as knights the warfare described consists of using the weapons of their bodies, often physical asceticism, to combat Satan. Despite the many different backgrounds and vocations in the Villers texts, the *vitae* make significant use of the *topos* of defending Christendom. The Villers saints, or *milites*, use the weapons of their physical bodies to both combat evil and progress along their path of conversion towards the contemplative ideal. Through their visionary experiences the efficacy of their somatic devotion is emphasised, both for the saints and, more importantly, for the audience of the *vitae*. A direct parallel between the *milites Christi* and secular knights is found in the religious application of courtly love literature. This image of the saints adhering to the chivalrous vocation is finally reinforced through the language and imagery of the *vitae*. The image that the Villers *vitae* present of a saint is a variation on the chivalrous ideal, or the *miles Christi*, which appears predominantly masculine. Certainly, the chivalrous vocation is integral to the portrayals of holiness in the Villers corpus; however, as is the case with the somatic and sensual model of holiness that modern scholarship has

termed feminine, conjoint thematic exploration of the *vitae* of male and female saints is necessary before it is possible to assign such an appellation. The final chapter of this thesis examines prominent themes which have often been linked with gender and considers the extent to which masculinity or femininity influences the ways in which an individual is portrayed as holy.

Chapter Four: *Sanctae Virgines vel Milites Christi?* The Role of Gender and the Search for Christian Masculinity in Liègeoise Hagiography

The analysis presented in the previous chapter illustrates that conversion, visionary experiences, devotion to the Blessed Virgin and the chivalrous ideal were important to the devotional lives of men. However, this analysis does not establish that they were specifically masculine themes. The same is true of the current state of research on feminine religious practice. Even a cursory glance at the *lives* of female saints, such as Lutgard of Aywières or Catherine of Siena, shows that suffering and visionary experiences were central to these women's spiritual lives; however, this should not necessarily be considered proof that these themes are feminine. Instead, as the previous chapter shows such themes were also important in the *vitae* of male saints. The aim of the present chapter is to examine the relationship between gender and religious behaviour and to elucidate forms of masculine or feminine devotional expression. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first three discuss forms of devotional practice with regards to the relative importance of gender. The chapter concludes with a discussion of what the Villers *vitae* reveal about the concept of masculine devotion.

Gender as an Essential Influencing Factor

Structure: As is made clear in Chapter Two of this thesis, the *vitae* of the Villers brothers and those of the *mulieres sanctae* emerged from a comparable social context. Similarly, the vocations of the Villers brothers correspond with the *mulieres sanctae*: two abbots, two abbesses; five choir monks, five nuns and four *conversi*, four beguines. Both groups were connected, to varying degrees, with the Cistercian Order.[1] The *vitae* of the Villers brothers exemplify Cistercian diversity, while those of the *mulieres sanctae* por-

1. Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, passim.

tray relative uniformity which is often thought to have been representative of a new form of feminine or beguine religious expression. The religious behaviour attributed to the Liègeoise female saints is by no means identical, yet their often-formulaic *vitae* are similar enough that, unlike the Villers brothers, they can be discussed as a single group.

In the prologue to his *vita Juettae*, Hugh de Floreffe reminds his audience that no one achieves perfection in a single bound. Instead, like the *vita Arnulfi*, this text asserts that each person advances at his or her own pace progressing from virtue to virtue.[2] Like the hagiographers of the Villers brothers, the men who catalogued the devotion of the *mulieres sanctae* acknowledged that the journey towards sainthood occurred over time. Although Caroline Walker Bynum claims that the *vitae* of holy women do not contain moments of crisis or "turning points," as is illustrated below, the three stages discussed earlier, contrition, repentance or active service, and public recognition as channels of divine grace, are as evident in the Liègeoise *vitae mulierum* as those of their contemporaries from Villers.[3]

All the Liègeois saints began as sinners. Though they did not necessarily commit heinous crimes, they invariably placed secular concerns over the interests of the divine. All then heard and responded to a calling to the religious life. They progressed to being recognised publicly as friends of God often through working miracles or providing evidence of visionary ability. In the Villers *vitae*, the stages of conversion adopt many guises, penitent sinners who made satisfaction for their sins by waging ascetic warfare with the weapons of their flesh; virtuous knights who did the same through crusading and righteous children who continued to climb in holiness. In contrast, the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* show little variation in describing the background of their subjects: the women are almost all

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2. VJH Prologue, par. 1, p. 863. Cf. VAR Prologue, par. 1, p. 608; VGA bk. 1, c. 3, par. 27, p. 282; Psalm 83:8.

3. Cf. Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, pp. 32-34.

from the newly-emerging mercantile class. If they did not desire to be saints from their childhood, they had at least remained virtuous. If they were not virgins, they had not willingly endured carnal pleasure. After enduring a period of hardship, these women all became known as contemplatives or visionaries.

These similarities can be explained by examining both the social milieu of these women and their hagiographers' intentions in composing their *vitae*. While it is almost certain that the effects of the so-called *Frauenfrage* have been exaggerated, it is equally certain that the changing social climate of the high Middle Ages had a tremendous effect on women's religious expression.[4] From the eleventh century onwards, the faithful throughout Western Europe demanded a more active role in their own spirituality. The resulting options show a definite gender bias: men were able to live lives of apostolic poverty or to preach;[5] ecclesiastical and social strictures rendered these options unavailable to women. Instead, women's religious lives became more difficult: entering a traditional convent almost certainly meant the encouragement of some degree of enclosure and members of the new "middling" class were often unable to afford the substantial dowries demanded by the insufficient number of women's monastic houses.[6] Influential churchmen recognised that the devotional practices of these women met an important need within the Church and made every effort to encourage them. The men who supported the fledgling beguine movement codified the women's lives and religious behaviour in so-called "beguine" *vitae*, which served both as a testament to its holiness and as a means of promoting this new way of life.[7]

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4. Lauwers et Simons, *Béguins et Béguines*, p. 9; Howell et al., "A Documented Presence," pp. 101-31.

5. McNamara, "The *Herrenfrage*," pp. 3-30.

6. Bolton, "*Vitae Matrum*," pp. 262-64; McNamara, "The Need to Give," p. 205; Grace M. Jantzen, *Power and Gender in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 199-202.

7. Monica Sandor, "The Popular Preaching of Jacques de Vitry" (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1993), pp. 122-23; idem, "Jacques de Vitry and the Spirituality of the *Mulieres Sanctae*," in *On Pilgrimage*, p. 173. Cf. Lauwers, "L'institution et le genre," pp. 294-302. For a discussion of the aims and influence of the hagiographer see, Hefferman, *Sacred Biography*, pp. 19-28.

In order for these *vitae* to promote this emerging vocation, it was necessary that the hagiographers depict subjects to whom their audience could relate. Jacques begins the first book of the *vita Mariae* by describing Marie's familial origins:

> In the diocese of Liège, in a town known as Nivelles, there lived a certain young woman, Marie, as gracious in life as in name. Marie was not born from common parents, and despite being blessed with all manner of worldly riches from her childhood, such treasures never captured her mind.[8]

Similarly, contemporary Liègeoise *vitae sanctarum* also began with rather mundane biographical information: Juette was the daughter of a *ministerialis* to the bishop of Liège;[9] Ida of Nivelles came from a virtuous family which was not lacking in secular wealth;[10] Beatrice was born to a wealthy urban family in Tienen.[11] These texts were innovative in that, rather than adhering to the traditional *topos* of giving a saint a noble background, they depict their subjects' familial origins as representative of, rather than exceptional to their social milieu.

The hagiographers typically follow their almost revolutionary portrayal of non-noble subjects with a series of recognisable hagiographic *topoi*: Ida of Louvain wished to grow in holiness from a young age;[12] Marie scorned worldly finery;[13] Christina rejected virtually all social strictures;[14] Ida, Beatrice and Juette rejected, or opposed, married life.[15] By

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8. "Fuit in Episcopatu Leodiensi in villa, quae dicitur Nivella juvencula quaedam, vita et nomine gratiosa Maria: quae (non) mediocribus orta parentibus, licet divitiis et multis bonis temporalibus abundaret, numquam tamen ejus animum bona transitoria ab annis puerilibus allexerunt" (VMO bk. 1, c. 1, par. 11, p. 639).

9. VJH prologue 1, par. 4, p 864; ibid c. 1, par. 15, p. 866. Cf. Isabelle Cochelin, "Juette (ou Yvette) de Huy (1158-1228), analyse de la Vita," (Université de Paris IV – Sorbonne, Mémoire de Maîtrise, 1986-1987), p. 25; A. Joris, *La ville de Huy au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1959), p. 421.

10. VIN c. 1.

11. VBN c.1, pp. 1-2. Cf. Roger DeGanck, *Beatrice of Nazareth in her Context* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1991); Amy Hollywood, "Inside Out: Beatrice of Nazareth and her Hagiographer," in *Gendered Voices*, pp. 78-98.

12. VIL c. 1, par. 1, p. 158.

13. VMO bk. 1, c. 1, par. 11-12, pp. 639-40.

14. VCM c. 1-2, passim.

15. VJH c. 1, par. 8, p. 865; ibid c. 2, par. 9-10, p. 865; VIN c. 2.

giving their subjects familiar social origins, the hagiographers of the *mulieres sanctae* emphasised their ordinariness; by showing their rejection of the world, they have set them apart as liminal figures. This portrayal was later heightened by accounts of the miracles associated with these women. These women lived in the world, but were not of the world. Thus, they were ideal models for illustrating the *via activa* or *via mixta*, that is, serving God without fleeing the secular life.

Caroline Walker Bynum argues that the *vitae* of male saints often illustrate moments of crisis such as the death of a parent, the saint leaving home or renouncing his possessions, while the same is not true of the *vitae* of their female contemporaries.[16] Upon close examination, particularly of the Liègeoise *vitae*, it becomes obvious that the women experience different, equally influential turning points. The same threefold journey of contrition, repentance and purgation can be seen in the *vitae* of holy women from the high Middle Ages, though this is frequently adapted towards women's social reality.

The *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* generally begin the tale of their subjects' journey towards God by portraying their subjects as Martha, that is, involved in acts of charity or service. After this period in which the saints serve lepers, beg publicly or undertake acts of asceticism, the *mulieres sanctae* progress to a stage where they are recognised as friends of God. During this time, they begin to embody the contemplative ideal represented by Mary. As was the case with the Villers *vitae*, the *lives* of the *mulieres sanctae* portrayed evidence of the saints' link with the divine by descriptions of ecstatic bliss, or visible signs of divine favour.[17] Like their male contemporaries, the *mulieres sanctae* typically achieved this ideal expression of devotion only at the end of their lives. The

16. Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, p. 32.

17. Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*, pp. 27-36; Idem, "Inside Out," pp. 78-98; Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls*, pp. 150-79.

vita Lutgardis explicitly details a threefold typology of the path to holiness.[18] The *vita Christinae* confines its portrayal of Christina's asceticism to the first half of the text.[19] The *vita Beatricis* explicitly states that Beatrice practised asceticism in her youth, but stopped when she had made sufficient progress along her spiritual path.[20] Like the path that is described in the previous chapter as typical of their male contemporaries, the *mulieres sanctae* could only reach the contemplative ideal embodied by Mary and Rachel *through* the service of Martha and Leah.[21]

The Villers *vitae* were written by their subjects' confreres, who had the opportunity to observe every aspect of the saints' daily lives. The *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* were written by the saint's confessor or by an admirer who, in some cases, was not personally acquainted with his saintly subject.[22] Rather than accessing the personal details that could add colour to a *vita*, the hagiographers of the *mulieres sanctae* presented *topoi* that enhanced the portrayal of their subjects' holiness and, at the same time, increased the formulaic character of the text. Perhaps as a result, the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* often adhere rigidly to the "ideals" of feminine holiness. This contrasts with the colourful diversity that characterises the Villers *vitae*. Abundus longed for holiness from his youth. Arnulfus and

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18. VLA bk. 2, c. 3, par. 43, p. 253. Cf. VLA bk. 1, c. 1, par. 12, p. 239.

19. VCM c. 2, par. 21, p. 654.

20. Beatrice's hagiographer ceases to relate her harsh self-punishment after she was consecrated as a Bride of Christ at the age of fifteen (VBN c. 12, pp. 66-68). For a discussion of the stages of spiritual progress see, Margot King, "The Dove at the Window: The Ascent of the Soul in Thomas de Cantimpré's *Life of Lutgard of Aywières*," in *Hidden Springs*, pp. 227-30. Cf. Petroff, "Introduction," pp. 14-15; Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*, pp. 41-42.

21. Constable, "The Interpretation of Martha and Mary," pp. 66-67.

22. For example, Thomas de Cantimpré came to Liège and wrote his *vita Christinae* eight years after her death; his *vita Margaretae* was constructed solely from information given by Margaret's Dominican confessor, Siger of Lille.

Simon were distracted from the path to holiness as young men. Gobertus sought guidance on whether or not his desire for the religious life was in accordance with divine will.[23]

Marriage and Sexuality: Proponents of the *Frauenfrage* maintain that the increasing ratio of women to men meant that marriage was simply not an option for many young women, who subsequently entered the religious life.[24] Whether or not the relative number of marriageable men and women changed significantly in Western Europe at this time, *vitae*, understandably, avoided portraying women forced to dedicate themselves to the Lord. Like many of their saintly female contemporaries, the *mulieres sanctae* openly opposed the married life.[25] Although the desire to remain single was often in rebellion against the wishes of the saint's family, there is every indication that hagiographers wished to preserve some semblance of the social order. In fact, Dyan Elliott points out that, despite frequent difficulties, in cases where a holy couple agreed to a chaste marriage, the man typically retained authority over the household in the eyes of the community.[26]

The parental ambition that their daughters make respectable marriages is entirely understandable: the merchant class was a product of the later medieval phenomenon of urbanisation, hence, it was not yet fully established in the early thirteenth century. For this reason, families from the middling social stratum often sought to forge alliances through

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23. The ideal of isolation is often associated with the Cistercian Order, but there are many instances in the *vitae* of the brothers interacting with the secular community. Notably, Arnulfus distributed food to the poor, counselled a woman whose daughter was possessed and was friends with a local recluse. Werricus was called upon to aid a difficult birth with his prayers and was known for his charity. Abundus maintained ties with his family.

24. McDonnell, *Beguines and Beghards*, pp. 83-85; Howell et al., "A Documented Presence," pp. 101-31; Phillips, "Beguines in Medieval Strasbourg," p. 20; Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession*, p. 255.

25. VMO bk. 1, c. 1, par. 12, p. 639; VJH c. 2, par. 9-10, p. 865; ibid c. 4, par. 12, p. 865. Cf. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, p. 19.

26. Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 258-65.

marriage.[27] Such bonds would both forge social and political alliances and enlarge their circle of business contacts.

The accounts of saints opposing marriage are equally understandable: throughout Christian history, marriage was tolerated, yet extolled as an inferior vocation to chastity. In particular, feminine virtue was linked, not to marital chastity, but virginity. Any woman who sought to recover her prelapsarian state of grace was called not to Eve's punishment of childbearing, but to renounce her sexuality and preserve her virginity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.[28] Through preserving her sexual purity a woman could transcend gender. A virgin saint was a powerful intercessor; however, a woman who had known sexual pleasure could only be recognised as such after a period of penance.[29]

The same idealisation of bodily purity, in particular physical virginity, was widely extolled for men in the early Church. The early Christians tolerated marriage as preferable to fornication. However, true disciples, both men and women, preserved their immaculate bodies for the imminent coming of the kingdom.[30] Later sources continue to praise the virginity of female saints. However, *vitae* and other didactic writings seldom praise male virginity and seem to adopt the view that chastity, either marital fidelity or adherence to religious vows later in life, was the loftiest ideal to which a man—even a male saint—could be expected to aspire.

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27. Martha C. Howell, "The Social Logic of the Marital Household in Cities of the Later Medieval Low Countries," in *The Household in Late Medieval Cities, Italy and Northwestern Europe Compared.* Proceedings of the International Conference Ghent 21st-22nd January 2000 (Louvain: Garant Publishers, 2000), pp. 185-202. Cf. Judith M. Bennett, "The Tie that Binds: Peasant Marriages and Families in Late Medieval England," in *Medieval Families: Perspectives on Marriage, Household, & Children*, ed. Carol Neel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 214-33.

28. Elizabeth Castelli, "I Will Make Mary Male: Pieties of the Body and Gender Transformation of Christian Women in Late Antiquity," *Body Guards: the Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, ed. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 31-33; Petroff, "Introduction," p. 35; Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 363-65; Daniel Boyarin, "On the History of the Early Phallus," in *Gender and Difference*," pp. 3-12.

29. Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 262-63.

30. Cf. 1 Thes 4:17.

The tradition of male virginity (rather than simply celibacy) is not often discussed in either medieval didactic sources or modern scholarship. However, as Peter Brown shows, male virginity was valued in the early Church. John Bugge's study, *Virginitas: An Essay in the History of a Medieval Ideal*, shows that it continued to be valued in the Western monastic tradition throughout the Middle Ages.[31] Hagiography presents examples of male saints who are praised for, or retain miraculous powers due to remaining physically pure.[32] However, virginity was not an obligatory *topos* in the *lives* of male saints in the later Middle Ages. Possibly due to the physical consequences of feminine loss of virginity, a woman who knew carnal pleasure lost something that could not be regained. As a lascivious man remained physically intact, his purity could be regained by receiving absolution for his sin.

Both the Villers *vitae* and the *lives* of male saints from the high Middle Ages emphasise their subjects' chastity without insisting that they had never known sexual pleasure.[33] Despite a long-standing association between femininity and the physical, medieval society appears to have believed men more susceptible to the temptations of the flesh. Societal ideals of masculinity, both in the Middle Ages and modern society, have often equated manliness with sexual prowess. Medieval medical experts advised regular sexual inter-

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31. Virginity is emphasised in some *vitae* of male saints from the high Middle Ages ("De B. Ambrosio Sansedonio," par. 7). Joan Cadden records the story of Alexius, an eleventh-century saint who desired to remain a virgin for Christ. Alexius' father pressured him into marriage, but he persuaded his wife that their marriage should be chaste. (Cadden, *The Meaning of Sex Difference*, pp. 260-67). Cf. Griffin, "*Ex exemplis illustribus*," p. 127, nn. 472-73.

32. One thirteenth-century Dominican was able to exorcise demons because of his physical purity; another received a visitation on his deathbed from the Blessed Virgin as a reward from maintaining his virginity (Griffin, "*Ex exemplis illustribus*," p. 127, nn. 472-73). Cf. "De. S. Andrea Corsino," c. 5, par. 25; Arnold, "Labour of Continence," pp. 108-14; Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*, pp. 114-23, 245-51.

33. Peter Brown's *Body and Society* and John Bugge's *Virginitas* demonstrate that physical virginity was important to the holiness of men from the days of the early Church. The *vita* of the later Elezear emphasises the fact that he remained physically chaste throughout his life and that he was granted divine visions and ecstasies on account of his sacrifice, suggesting that the value attached to male virginity never entirely disappeared ("De S. Elezear" c. 1, par. 8, 10-11, p. 578). Further study on the gendered aspects of this particular feature of sanctity is necessary.

course in order to balance the humours, and sexual conquest was still considered a sign of virility.

Even a man with the purest ideals could fall victim to sexual sin as he slept. While awake, it was believed that he would suffer temptation from the slightest glimpse of feminine beauty. This is illustrated in hagiography. For example, a male friend of Marie d'Oignies experienced strirrings of sexual arousal when she laid her hand on his arm.[34] In hagiography, the masculine ideal lies in overcoming male sexual desires. In the *Chronica Villariensis*, a man is portrayed as having overcome his physical urges so completely that his genitalia had vanished. The chronicler depicts this as him having become a eunuch for the kingdom physically as well as spiritually.[35] The Villers *vitae*, and contemporary *lives*, depict many instances of the struggle to maintain chastity. Abundus and Arnulfus are tempted by Satan in the guise of a beautiful naked woman.[36] Charles counts beautiful women among the empty pleasures of the world that he renounces for Christ. Simon was tormented by lust, from which he was released after a period of physical asceticism.[37] Conquering desire was a certain sign of attaining manly virtue. The comely demons that assaulted Arnulfus, Abundus or Bernard, and tempted Simon illustrate that these men had both rejected worldly temptations, and were no longer ruled by their fleshly desires, which was often considered the femininity of their flesh.[38]

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34. VMO bk. 2, c. 8, par. 75, p. 656. Cf. Murray, "'The law of sin,'" pp. 14-18.

35. "Nec apparuit in loco dicto aliquod vestigium genitalium nisi sola planities plana, clara et mundo, reverberans oculos intuentium claritate nimia" (Chronica bk. 1, c. 25, p. 202). Cf. Murray, "'The law of sin'," pp. 9-22; Newman, "Crucified by the Virtues," pp. 195-96.

36. VAR bk. 1, c. 1, par. 6, pp. 609-10; VAB c. 5. Cf. VPB bk. 1, c. 3, par. 7; "De B. Ambrosio Sansedonio," c.1, par. 6.

37. VCV c. 1, par. 2, p. 977; VSA f. 211r, par. 6. Cf. DM t. 1, bk. 3, c. 43, pp. 182-83; Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, pp. 73-99.

38. In an interesting parallel, modern psychoanalytic theory speaks of conquering sexual desire as a sign of having overcome the feminine creative impulse. See, Eugene Monick, *Phallos: Sacred Image of the Masculine* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1997), pp. 57-60.

Hagiographers seldom depict female saints as being tempted by desire for a purely sexual union. Rather than physical encounters with nameless and faceless demons, female saints are often tempted by the prospect of a relationship with a particular individual. Though committed to her heavenly bridegroom, Margaret of Ypres finds it difficult to abandon all contact with her earthly suitor. Lutgard considers the idea of pursuing a conventional romantic relationship. After being freed from one marriage, Juette of Huy is attracted to a close friend of the family.[39] In the instances where a female saint marries (usually against her will) her hagiographer portrays her marriage as playing a formative role on her journey towards God. Marie begins her acts of physical penance and Juette experiences conflict when attempting to avoid a second husband, which is similar to the *agon* of *passio* literature, which is a turning point as dramatic as any that Bynum mentions in the *lives* of male saints.[40]

The Liègeoise *vitae virorum* portray sexual temptation, yet they seldom concern themselves with the temptation of a commitment to marriage or an emotional attraction to any particular woman. Let us consider the case of Gobertus of Aspremont. Although archival evidence indicates that Gobertus was married, his *vita* neither explicitly mentions his wife nor children. It certainly does not portray the marriage as having any role in Gobertus' religious development. When Gobertus entered the monastic life, his hagiographer cited Christ's words, "if any man come to me without hating his mother, father, children, *wife*, and possessions, he cannot be my disciple..."[41] Jean Lefèvre argues that this was a way

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39. VMY par. 5, 8; VJH c. 6, par. 16-17, p. 866; ibid c. 7, par. 18-19, pp. 866-67.

40. VMO bk. 1, c. 1, par. 12, pp. 639-40. Shortly after she was widowed, Juette's father attempted to arrange a second marriage. He persuaded the bishop of Liège to convince Juette to do his will. Like the officials who confronted Barbara and Catherine of Alexandria, the bishop, Ranulph, was initially willing to impose his will on the young woman, but was soon instead "converted" through her faith and perseverance (VJH c. 6, par. 15, p. 866). Cf. Bynum, *Fragmnetation and Redemption*, pp. 32-34; Elliott, *Reading the Roads*, pp. 16-18.

41. Luke 14:26.

of indicating approval for Gobertus' decision without devoting undue energy to what was, perhaps a controversial matter.[42] As a Villers brother, Gobertus' hagiographer was undoubtedly aware of his subject's past; however, the mere fact of his knowledge does not prove that the reason for his gospel reference. This same quotation appears to have been popular in Villers and is also cited in the *vita* of the unmarried Godefridus Pachomius.[43]

Rather than being purely a means of satisfying lust, marriage both helped to maintain social order and carried with it an element of responsibility.[44] In Gobertus' case, his noble status would have carried with it the duty of propagating the family name. Gobertus' marriage therefore, was a "masculine" duty rather than a concession to the "feminine" needs of the flesh. Transcending desire was an important component of Christian masculinity; however, despite influential precedents, it was difficult for hagiographers to depict manly virtue as demanding the avoidance of duty.[45] For women in the later Middle Ages, marriage did not entail the same sense of duty. It is logical therefore that the hagiographers of men should extol conquering lust, but make little mention of avoiding marriage.

Erudition: Hagiographic portrayals of sanctity were never subtle. However, in the case of controversial saints, hagiographers emphasised their subject's connection with the divine through extraordinary *mirabilia* such as levitation, miraculous lactation or bright lights appearing while the saint prayed. As a visible sign of their link with heaven saints were often gifted with knowledge, either prophetic abilities, which are discussed below, or erudition. While miraculous scholastic edification is a prominent *topos* in the *vitae* of

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42. Lefèvre, "Gobert," p. 6, nn. 9-11. The *life* of the married Elezear, gives only a passing mention to the role of his wife ("De. S. Elezear," c. 1, par. 7, pp. 577-78). Marriage or the threat of marriage is often mentioned in relation to holy women from the high Middle Ages, but seldom in the *vitae* of their male contemporaries.

43. VGP c. 4, p. 264.

44. Karras, *Boys to Men*, pp. 16-17.

45. Saints who left family responsibilities for the sake of the heavenly kingdom were common in the earliest days of Christianity—at a time when the coming of the kingdom of earth was believed immanent (Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 33-64). This was a less practical model of sainthood in the changing social climate of the later Middle Ages.

both male and female saints, there are significant differences in its portrayal. The Villers brothers are often gifted with knowledge, that is understanding of doctrine or the ability to teach. In the *vitae mulierum*, the erudition generally takes a much more basic form: simple Latin literacy.[46]

Only one *vita* from the Villers corpus, *vita Goberti*, mentions its subject's relation to letters.[47] Because of his illiteracy, Gobertus was unable to participate fully in the divine office, and contented himself with the solace he could receive from the sound of the Little Office of the Virgin. In contrast, the *vitae mulierum* often depict their subjects acquiring the ability to read by miraculous means. This discrepancy is far from surprising. Although far from universal, literacy was common in thirteenth-century Cistercian communities.[48] Hence, literacy would neither have been extraordinary nor a mark of sanctity in a monastic community. Even if a brother had not been taught to read Latin, proximity to his more erudite confreres would have presented opportunities for learning. It is impossible to discern how frequently this occurred; nevertheless, it is an opportunity which would have been far more common to men than women.

Although many beguine communities were known for providing instruction and education, the association between being able to read Latin and women's monastic houses

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46. Pierre Boglioni, "Saints and Miraculous Learning of Latin."

47. VGA bk. 2, c. 3, par. 61-62. Even the *vitae conversorum*, whose subjects are often though perhaps not accurately considered universally illiterate, make no statement about the literacy of the men they portray. Herbert of Clairvaux recounts an instance of a *conversus* who became literate after dreaming of a woman who taught him letters (Herbert, *De Miraculis*, bk. 1, c. 31, c. 1304). Cf. Newman, "Crucified by the Virtues," pp. 186. The statutes of the Cistercian Chapter General indicate that at least some members of the laybrotherhood were lettered. They often forbid *conversi* to read publicly or even in the refectory or from owning non-religious books—both of which would be unnecessary if dealing with an illiterate group of men. (Statuta 1157 c. 7; UC c. 9, p. 68). Cf. Dubois, "L'Institution," p. 217.

48. "Si conversus est *vel monachus* qui non intelligat litteras idem illi romane exponat sacerdos" (EO 93, c. 33, p. 268). Cf. EO 71, c. 6, p. 212. For illiterate novices see, EO 102, c. 24, p. 296; EO 113, c. 11, p. 318. VGA bk. 2, c. 3, 61-62. Because of his illiteracy, Gobertus was unable to participate fully in the divine office, and contented himself with the solace he could receive from the sound of the Little Office of the Virgin.

was far from automatic.[49] Hence, a literate woman's hagiographer was often obliged to explain her abilities and often did so with reference to supernatural means. In the Liègeoise *vitae mulierum*, the subject frequently acquires the gift of letters through miraculous means: Christina of St. Trond, Lutgard of Aywières and Ida of Louvain all exhibit the ability to expound on Latin texts, despite having no explicable knowledge of or formal training in the language.[50]

The hagiographers of miraculously-erudite saints attached considerable importance to the social strictures of their day. This is shown in that not one of these women is depicted teaching anything other than orthodox interpretations of the gospel and not one is portrayed using her miraculous gift to fulfil the socially masculine role of official public teaching. However, the hagiographers' adherence to convention was, at best, superficial. In many cases, the *vitae* leave no doubt that their subjects attained positions of power within their communities. Although they are not portrayed as proclaiming the Word of God in an official setting, the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* often recount instances of their "preaching" and "teaching," which was carried out through unconventional means such as their physical bodies or song.[51]

Jane Chance contends that female saints, particularly those who attained knowledge through miraculous means, were perceived as endangering male clerical authority. However, the visionary experiences and instances of such miraculous learning in the Liègeoise *vitae mulierum* reinforced the accepted authority structures of the Church.[52]

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49. Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, pp. 80-85.

50. VIL bk. 3, c. 5, par. 26, p. 188; VCM c. 3, par. 31, p. 655; VLA bk. 1, c. 1, par. 12, p. 239. Cf. VLA bk. 2, c. 2, par. 40, p. 252.

51. Muessig, "Prophecy and Song," pp. 146-58; Jo Ann McNamara, "Living Sermons: Consecrated Women and the Conversion of Gaul," in *Peaceweavers*, pp. 19-38.

52. Jane Chance, "Speaking in *Propria Persona*. Authorizing the Subject as a Political Act in Late Medieval Female Spirituality," in *Texts and Contexts*, ed. Juliette Dor, et al., pp. 270-71; Blamires, *Case for Women*, pp. 193-98; Lauwers, "L'expérience béguinale," pp. 61-103.

Though they became respected public figures, none of the *mulieres sanctae* is explicitly portrayed as transgressing morally acceptable boundaries. Unlike the clerical path, the semi-religious vocation did not carry with it the authority of ecclesial office. Instead, these women relied on the sanction of recognised Church officials for the continuation of their unique vocations. Because of the dubious status of these proto-beguines, their hagiographers used every means at their disposal to illustrate both the sanctity of these women and the orthodoxy of the semi-religious vocation.

The depiction of miraculous gifts in the *vita Lutgardis* is particularly interesting. Thomas tells us that Lutgard renounced the gift of healing for the "more advanced" gift of knowledge, which, as is typical of female saints from this period took the form of Latin literacy. The ability to heal by miraculous means would have allowed Lutgard to help her community and to participate in the active service of Martha. Latin literacy would have allowed Lutgard to read and understand the Scripture and the Liturgy of the Hours, thus helping her to aspire towards the contemplative ideal of Mary. The hierarchy becomes more logical when considered in the context of the discussion of conversion presented earlier in this thesis: active service was valued and necessary, but contemplation was the ideal to which all saints eventually aspired. It is also important to remember that Lutgard occupied a role as abbess of Aywières, a position that would have demanded significant public recognition. The ability to heal would have allowed Lutgard to become recognised as someone who is called upon in a time of need. Latin literacy would have reinforced her authority and helped her to become known as a public figure.[53]

To be respected for his learning, it was necessary for a brother to be exceptional: either he would have the ability to teach or perhaps have an advanced understanding of a partic-

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53. Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 59-87.

ular theological tenet. Again, because Latin literacy was so common in the monastic milieu, simply being literate would not automatically be a mark of sanctity. The Villers *vitae* depict knowledge that granted an advanced understanding through miraculous means. In the *vita Petri*, the Blessed Virgin explains the controversial doctrine of the Assumption in such a way that it could be easily understood and Abundus is directed to a patristic sermon on the doctrine and given the ability to explain the Assumption doctrine to his confreres.[54] Despite his lack of formal education, Nicholaos is given the ability both to converse with and to teach learned theologians.[55] A divine vision enables both Abundus and Arnulfus to understand the mystery of the Trinity.[56]

While extolling a subject's Latin literacy appears to be connected with gender, other variables seem to have influenced the way in which a hagiographer praises his subject's erudition.[57] Both in the Villers corpus and in the contemporary *vitae*, the *topos* of education through miraculous means often occurs in the *vitae* of men who, for varying reasons, such as lack of finance or opportunity, did not receive a monastic education.[58] In the Villers corpus, as well as in contemporary *vitae*, miraculous erudition occurred when the saint held an authoritative position, but lacked the education normally associated with his office.[59]

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54. VPV f. 90, r; VAB c. 13, p. 23.

55. VNC par. 5, pp. 278-79; cf. VAR bk. 2, c. 3, par. 19, pp. 620-21.

56. VAR bk. 2, c. 3, par. 18, p. 620; VAB c. 6, pp. 17-18.

57. The *vitae* of male saints often describe their subjects' education in considerable detail. VIC bk. 1, c. 3, pp. 259-60; VAB c. 2, pp 13-14; Jordanus, "De S. Dominico," c. 1, par. 5.

58. In addition to the Villers examples, the *topos* of miraculous erudition is found connected with the fourteenth-century monk, John of Morigny (Fanger, "Plundering the Egyptian Treasure," pp. 242-49).

59. Thomas de Cantimpré recounts that the abbess of Argensolles was also expected to hold some authority, but had not received a conventional education. Thomas tells us that the abbess received, seemingly, miraculous erudition. However, unlike the *mulieres sanctae*, she did not specifically receive knowledge of Latin. (BUA bk. 2, c. 46, par. 5, pp. 430-31). For the connection of Argensolles with Villers see, VAR bk. 2, c. 4, par. 31, p. 623.

Marian Devotion: Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogus mtraculorum* relates an instance in which a young novice noted the central role of the Virgin in the lives of holy men. Somewhat perturbed, the novice asked his master whether the Blessed Virgin was equally concerned with the fate of women. Rather than dismissing the question as irrelevant, the master assured the novice that the Virgin loves her male and female children equally and proceeded to relate tales of the Virgin's benevolence towards holy women. Evidence from thirteenth-century Rheno-Mosan *vitae* does more to justify the novice's question than the master's response: Marian visions play an important role in three of the twelve *vitae mulierum* and six of the ten *vitae* of their male contemporaries.[60] While the remainder of the *vitae mulierum* give only a passing mention to Marian devotion, the other *lives* of the Villers brothers depict practices such as public celebrations of Marian feasts, meditation on the Virgin's joys or observance of the Little Office of the Virgin.

Many of the Villers *vitae* portray their subjects as devoted to the Queen of Heaven. As is detailed in Chapter Three, Abundus longed to kiss the Virgin's hand; Walter sought to win tournaments in her honour and Godefridus assiduously attended to the altar in the Lady Chapel. This devotion was often depicted in language that was reminiscent of courtly or secular romance. However, despite occasional erotic overtones in accounts of Marian devotion, the *vitae* never ceased to be praise Mary as the inviolate Queen of Chastity. As has been made clear above, framing a yearning for heaven in the language of *eros* was well established in tradition. Expressing yearning for a beautiful woman was both powerful symbolic language and in keeping with the norms of a literary age famed for its produc-

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60. DM bk. 7, c. 1. The Virgin offers protection and reassurance to Margaret of Ypres and Juette of Huy (VMY par. 10-12, p. 111; VJH c. 15, par. 45-46, p. 872). The same patterns are found in other Marian texts: the Virgin of Rocamadour seems to have been concerned with warfare and hunting, and these male concerns are reflected in the miracles connected with this shrine (Signori, "Miracle Kitchen," pp. 286-87). Cf. Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, pp. 108, 111-13; Bynum, "...And Woman," pp. 259, 281 n. 6; Clark, "Priesthood of the Virgin", p. 9; Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 159-60.

tion of literary courtly romance. It is also important to note that the Marian devotion of the Villers brothers differs from the erotic expressions of bridal mysticism. For reasons that are discussed in more detail below, it is far from surprising that while many of the women of the high Middle Ages longed for union with Christ, none of the Villers brothers expresses the desire for such a relationship with the Blessed Virgin. Instead, the hagiographers are explicit: the brothers venerate the Virgin, much in the same way that they are devoted to the Church, that is, in order that they might draw closer to Christ.[61]

Despite its didactic nature, it is possible to see clear similarities between hagiography and popular literature, particularly courtly romance. The courtly ideal of winning the king's favour through serving his queen was widely applied to male characters in courtly romance but seldom to their female contemporaries. In a similar way, hagiographers used the *topos* of pleasing the King of Heaven through serving his Queen in the *vitae* of holy men more frequently than women.[62]

In the Villers *vitae*, instances of Marian visions, veneration and miracles occur with a frequency in keeping with the mores of the period. Moreover, the *vitae* record that devotion to the Virgin often helped the Villers saints to grow closer to God. When examined closely, it seems that the Virgin plays a role in regulating the external manifestations of her servants' devotion. The Virgin helps Gobertus, Abundus, Walter, and Godefridus

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61. VAB c. 3, p. 14. Both patristic texts and writings of the later Middle Ages explicitly saw the Virgin as analogically and synecdochically related to the church (Honorius Augustodunensis, *The Seal of Blessed Mary* tr. Amelia Carr (Toronto: Peregrina Translations, 1991), p. 47. Cf. Hunter, "The Virgin," pp. 285-90; Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved*, pp. 155-59).

62. Though this is true of hagiography, it is curious that the female mystics from the Low Countries had a tendency to portray the soul as a knight seeking union with the feminine *Minne*: Love, or God. Bynum has read this as a courtly motif, but with a gender inversion: the feminine soul takes an active, or masculine, role in seeking a feminised Lady God. (Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, pp. 191-96). The gendered nature of Marian devotion continues to be problematic. On the one hand, the Virgin is held up as a model for women, while at the same time, feminist theologians often consider her role as simultaneously virgin and mother somewhat problematic (Ute Ranke-Heinemann, *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven: Women Sexuality and the Catholic Church* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1990), pp. 340-48).

Pachomius to both realise and to persevere in their vocations;[63] she saves the vocation of Baldwin; she gives public commendation for Arnulfus' controversial devotional practices and helps Abundus and Arnulfus care for the souls of men and women who approach the monastery.

The same is true of other medieval didactic literature. In the *exempla* from Caesarius, and contemporary collections of *miracula*, the Blessed Virgin is portrayed as a protectress of sinners. Tales of penitent sinners, such as those of Beatrice, the pregnant abbess, the male penitent thief and the remorseful squire, would have been familiar to medieval audiences.[64] The Virgin helps these individuals return to the path of righteousness: she impersonates Beatrice, hides the abbess' child, saves the thief from death and both extinguishes the squire's lust for his master's wife and prevents it from being discovered. However, in each instance she facilitiates repentance only after she has prevented them from being ashamed in the eyes of their communities.

Tales connected with holy men often portray the Blessed Virgin as being instrumental in affirming doctrine. Given the controversy, detailed earlier in this thesis, that surrounded the doctrine of the Assumption in the thirteenth century, it is no surprise that tales connected with Mary's corporeal presence in heaven recur throughout the Villers corpus. The doctrine of the Assumption was controversial in the early thirteenth century, however the Cistercian Chapter General mandated that it be celebrated universally in Cistercian houses.[65] Given the existence of the *Cogitis me* and the Cistercian emphasis on tradition it was almost inevitable that some dispute would have arisen over the feast.

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63. VAB c. 4, p. 15.

64. DM t. 1, bk. 7, c. 34, pp. 502-03; DM t. 1, bk. 7, c. 32, pp. 499-501 (squire).

65. As is made clear earlier in this thesis, the origin of most extant manuscripts of the Villers *vitae* suggests that they were written for an audience of Cistercian brothers The exception to this is the *vita Arnulfi.* which interestingly, does not devote a great deal of attention to the Assumption doctrine. The origins of various manuscript traditions of the Villers *vitae* are discussed earlier in this thesis.

The connection of the *mulieres sanctae* to the Cistercian Order was, in most cases, unofficial.[66] In the high Middle Ages most traditional convents, that is, unreformed Benedictine houses, refused to accept the paternity of new women's communities. Traditional female monasteries often imposed dowries which ensured that entry was all but impossible for non-noble women. Officially, the Cistercian Order was not substantially more in favour of establishing women's communities; however, groups of women, particularly in the southern Low Countries, chose to live according to Cistercian custom and with the support of Cistercian confessors. There is evidence that, despite the Chapter General's warnings, the paternity of women's houses was actively sought by some male Cistercian houses, including Villers.[67]

As unofficial affiliation with a Cistercian house was one of the few options that remained available to religious women, the associations between the order and the *mulieres sanctae* may be more a result of social circumstance than a conscious choice. The *mulieres sanctae* were unlikely to follow Cistercian precepts such as mandatory celebration of the Assumption. As such, they would have been less likely than their male contemporaries would have been to become involved in debates regarding the truth of this doctrine. The Villers brothers would have had more numerous vocational options available to them and are more likely to have made a conscious choice to enter the Cistercian Order. As a result of this, they would likely have felt some personal attachment to its doctrinal teachings.

Although hagiographic depictions of Marian devotion are more common in the *vitae* of men than women, other evidence suggests that in actual practice, women were at least as devoted to the Virgin as their male contemporaries. The Virgin was the most common

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66. Roisin, *L'hagiographie*, passim.

67. Statuta 1227 c. 18, p. 59. Cf. Statuta 1228 c. 16, p. 68; Constance Berman, "Were There Twelfth-Century Cistercian Nuns?" *Church History* 68 (1999): 824-57; Lefèvre, "L'abbaye de Villers," pp. 195-207.

patroness of beguine houses in thirteenth-century Liège.[68] A twelfth-century psalter from the Benedictine nunnery of Shaftesbury depicts a woman kneeling before the crowned Virgin.[69] A beguine house in Gand required novices to recite three chaplets of the Virgin daily.[70] The Blessed Virgin was the most popular patron of beguine houses in the southern Low Countries.[71] A small ivory Virgin from the treasury of Oignies shows that veneration of the Blessed Virgin was a recognised form of devotion in this house.[72] Women were encouraged to learn the Little Office of the Virgin;[73] and Mary was commonly portrayed in beguine art, often wearing a beguine habit.[74]

In addition, indirect evidence from the Liègeoise *vitae virorum* suggests that women were perceived as being under the protection of the Blessed Virgin. The *vitae* of Abundus and Charles record that the sisters of both men desired to enter the religious life. As is common in hagiography, both women met with opposition from their families, who saw a mortal bridegroom as preferable to a heavenly one.[75] Their brothers' *vitae* recount that when Abundus and Charles became aware of their sisters' plight they immediately sought aid from the Blessed Virgin. In each case, the *vitae* tell us that the Virgin enabled these men to intervene in such a way that the will of God, as manifest through the women's wishes, was fulfilled.[76]

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68. Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, p. 87-88, esp. Table 4, p. 88.

69. Morgan, "Texts and Images," p. 130.

70. G. G. Meersseman, "Les frères prêcheurs et le mouvement dévot en Flandre au XIIIe siècle" *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 18 (1948): 86-88.

71. Twenty-one of seventy-eight beguinages were dedicated to the Blessed Virgin (Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, p. 87).

72. Robert Didier, "A propos de la Vierge en Ivoire d'Aulne-Oignies," *Autour de Hugo d'Oignies*, edited by R. Didier and J. Tossant (Namur: Société Archeologique de Namur, 2003), pp. 385-89.

73. Humbert, "De eruditione," bk. 2, tract. 1, c. 97, quoted in Farmer, "The Beggar's Body," p. 159. Cf. Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion*, pp. 225-32.

74. Ziegler, "Reality as Imitation," pp. 112-26.

75. VAB c. 12, p. 23. Cf. Luke 1:38.

76. VAB c. 12, p. 23 (cf. 2 Kings 2:10); VCV c. 3, par. 19, p. 979.

Despite the overwhelming evidence connecting women to the Blessed Virgin, Liègeois hagiographers seldom recorded instances of Marian devotion in the *vitae* of their female saints. A cursory glance at the *vitae mulierum* suggests a feminine spirituality that was inherently centred on Christ. While the *mulieres sanctae* were undoubtedly devoted to their Saviour, a close examination of the *vitae* suggests that the conspicuous absence of Marian devotion may not indicate a feminine antipathy towards his mother. The Liègeois hagiographers often identify their female subjects with the Blessed Virgin, whether her humility or her gift of miraculous lactation which, as Thomas de Cantimpré emphasises, was also granted to Christina of St. Trond.[77] The many instances of female saints showing affection towards the infant Christ offers further evidence of a maternal role.[78] The Liègeoise *vitae* and accounts of holy women throughout Europe commonly emphasise their subjects' humility and obedience, which the hagiographers portray as a form of *imitatio Mariae*.[79]

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77. VCM c. 2, par. 19.

78. There is no mention in the *lives* of a corresponding male model. However, it is interesting to note that the role of Joseph changed around this time. Joseph was now no longer an aged and remote guardian, but a young husband who protects and provides for his wife and foster Son. It is possible that the masculine devotion to the infant Jesus can be read as "paternal." (Rosemary Drage-Hale, "Joseph as Mother: Adaptation and Appropriation in the Construction of Male Virtue," *Medieval Mothering* ed. John Cami Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1996), pp. 102-110). Cf. Brian Patrick McGuire, "Patterns of Male Affectivity in the Late Middle Ages: The Case of Jean Gerson," in *Varieties of Devotion in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Susan C. Karant-Nunn (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 163-178.

79. VMY c. 15, p. 114; ibid c. 33, pp. 121-22; ibid c. 34, p. 122; ibid c. 52, p. 128. VMO prologue, par. 11, p. 638; ibid bk. 1, c. 1, par. 14, 15, 17, pp. 640-41; ibid bk. 1, c. 2, par. 23, p. 642; ibid bk. 1. c. 3, par. 28, 30, 32, pp. 643-44; ibid bk. 1, c. 4, par. 39-40, pp. 646-47; ibid bk. 2, c. 6, par. 51, 54, 55, 57-61, 63, pp. 650-51; ibid bk. 2, c. 8, par. 74, 78-80, pp. 656-57; ibid bk. 2, c. 11, par. 97-99, pp. 661-63; ibid, bk. 2, c. 12, par. 104, 107, p. 665; VAS c. 3, par. 24, p. 481. There is no exact classical male counterpart to an *ancilla*. The word for a male household servant would simply have been *servus* (*serva* is also used in classical texts for a female servant, but is absent from the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae*). The Villers brothers are rarely referred to as *servi Christi*. Instead, their *vitae* generally refer to them as *milites, althletae* or simply *viri Christi*. Cf. Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion*, pp. 215-32; Ellington, *From Sacred Body*, pp. 50, 69-70; Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 260-69; Mooney, "*Imitatio Christi* or *Imitatio Mariae*?," pp. 58-71.

Bridal Mysticism: The physicality that is so often attributed to feminine spirituality reached its pinnacle in the hagiographic portrayal of the desire that holy women showed for their Heavenly Bridegroom. In the *vita Mariae*, Jacques de Vitry described women whose desire for God caused them to languish and to grow weaker in body. He tells us of one whose desire became so unbearable that her face became hollow; of another whose prayers drove her into such a state of ecstasy that she was unable to move and of a third who lost control of her limbs while praying.[80] As well as physical anguish, the hagiographers of the *mulieres sanctae* often describe physical ecstasy. Marie's *vita* records that she was afflicted with exquisite and wondrous pleasure whenever she embraced the crucifix.[81] Ida of Nivelles melted inwardly "as wax before a flame" whenever she contemplated the Incarnation and Alice was assured that her leprosy was a gift, a sign of perfect love, so that she might have leisure to be with her divine bridegroom in the "bridal-chamber of her mind."[82]

In addition to the feelings of physical yearning for the divine, hagiographers often expressed their subjects' experiences of Christ using corporeal imagery. Lutgard physically exchanged her own heart for that of Christ and kissed the wound in his side.[83] Margaret received the Eucharist, the Body of Christ, from Christ himself.[84] Ida of Louvain experienced physical flesh when she heard the words "*verbum caro factus est*" during prayer.[85] Alice experienced physical comfort after suckling from Christ's wounds.[86] As would be expected, these physical experiences of union or contact with the divine caused the saints to experience ecstasy which was described as almost unbearable.

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80. VMO prologue, 6-7, pp. 637-38.

81. VMO bk. 1, c. 2, par. 21, p. 641.

82. VAS c. 2, par. 9, p. 479.

The *vitae* of holy women were undeniably erotic. As is discussed in Chapter Two, the language of *eros*—longing and desire for God—was common in the *vitae* and writings of both men and women.[87] When we read Bernard's sermons, it becomes clear that erotic feelings towards the divine were not an exclusive property of women.[88] However, they do seem to have been connected to femininity. It is important to recall that even male Christian writers considered themselves "feminine" in relation to God. It was not the saints' masculine bodies, but their grammatically and allegorically feminine souls (*animae*) that strove for union with the divine.[89] As holy men progressed towards union with God, they renounced their masculine power, wealth and control and increasingly identified themselves with their *animae*.[90]

Not surprisingly, scholars interested in gender and religion have sought to explore the ways in which the language of *eros* differs in the *vitae* of men and women.[91] Much of this work has focussed on the ways in which male saints have sought to "feminise" the divine as the Church (*Ecclesia*), Lady Poverty (*Paupertas*) or Wisdom (*Sapientia*).[92] After noticing the erotic language of union in the *vitae mulierum* and the passionate devotion that the brothers feel towards the Mother of God, it is tempting to postulate an instance

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83. VLA bk. 1, c. 1, par. 12, p. 239.

84. VMY 24, p. 118.

85. VIL bk. 1, par. 23 p. 164.

86. VAS c. 2, par. 10, p. 479.

87. Matter, *Voice of My Beloved*, pp. 20-48; Turner, *Eros and Allegory*, pp. 25-45.

88. *Sermo* 1, 1-2; *Sermo* 2, 2; Sermo 2, 9. Cf. Bugge, *Virginitas*, pp. 81-95; Shawn M. Kramer, "The Virile Bride of Bernard of Clairvaux" *Church History* 69 (2000): 308, n. 13.

89. Eilberg Schwartz, "God's Phallus," pp. 36-38.

90. Hildegard Elisabeth Keller, *My Secret Is Mine: Studies on Religion and Eros in the German Middle Ages* (Louvain: Peeters, 2003), p. 122

91. Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, pp. 206-11.

92. Suso, *Life of a Servant*, c. 3. Cf. Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, pp. 206-22; Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride and the Church," pp. 283-85.

of direct gender inversion. That is, to speculate if the devotion the women felt towards Christ is directed in the writings of and about men to the Queen of Heaven. As was discussed in Chapter Two, twelfth-and thirteenth-century commentators—including Rupert of Deutz, Alan of Lille and Honorius Augustodunensis—favoured a Marian interpretation of Solomon's bridal song.[93]

In *vitae*, depictions of mystical marriage between an individual and Christ were a symbolic way of showing union of a saint with heaven. Though the mores of the religious climate during the high Middle Ages encouraged devotion to the Blessed Virgin, union with Mary was not an end in itself and could not be substituted for union with Christ. Instead of simply divinising the Virgin, her devotees sought her favour, hoping that through her intercession they might receive, in the words of Goswin of Bossut, "the summit of her Son's grace."[94]

Ulrike Wiethaus and Michael O'Carroll have regarded the Marian devotion reflected in the *lives* and writings of men from the high Middle Ages as evidence that the newly celibate clergy found a divine outlet for their sublimated sexual desires.[95] A psycho-sexual explanation takes no account of the social or historical context and is, as such, somewhat reductionist. However, the role of biological sex and its associations may account for some of the gendered language used to express relations between the saints and the divine. As Howard Eilberg-Schwarz has pointed out, there are obvious difficulties for Judeo-Christian heterosexual men in using the language of *eros* to express their love for

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93. Ann Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 60-72; Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved*, pp. 340-46.

94. "Cepit etiam benedicte matris Domini devotus amator existere, piisimam venerari et salutare frequenter omni laude dignissimam, ut tanto cumulatiorem a Filio gratiam meretur accipere" (VAB c. 3, p. 14). Cf. Ellington, *From Sacred Body*, p. 138.

95. O'Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin*, pp. 22-48; Wiethaus, "Christian Piety," pp. 48-61. Cf. Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*, pp. 114-16.

a male deity.[96] The language and imagery in some *vitae* from the Villers corpus suggests that perhaps, in a spiritual climate that encouraged the use of erotic language some men felt more comfortable expressing their erotic desire for Mary, now commonly associated with Solomon's bride, than for her Son.[97]

Perhaps more significant than the absence of Marian erotic imagery, is the fact that the Villers *vitae* depict "feminine," intimacy and intense erotic desire between the brothers and Christ.[98] After reading the Villers texts, it is clear that these men would have felt some empathy with Jacques' "multitude of holy virgins," who languished with desire for Christ. When overhearing the communion antiphon, Abundus had felt that "his heart grew warm within him," and was overcome by a blazing passion. On another occasion, a chance hearing of the communion antiphon instigated an irresistible urge to roll on the floor and rejoice at the presence of his bridegroom.[99] Upon seeing, experiencing and understanding the mystery of the Triune God, Arnulfus is overcome by an ecstatic bliss, which Goswin describes in words from the Song of Songs, "my beloved to me and I to him" (Cant 2: 16), and "I have found the one my soul loves: I shall hold him fast and not let go" (Cant 3:4).[100]

The equation of *eros* purely with sexual urges appears to be a peculiarity of the modern age. Medieval writers seemed secure in the knowledge that the language of *eros*, like all language functioned on many levels.[101] The Villers hagiographers seem to have viewed the spiritual journey as a personal love affair between Christ and the human soul: some of the *vitae* even made direct parallels between the saints and Solomon's bride, referring to

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96. Eilberg-Schwartz, "God's Phallus," pp. 36-47. Cf. James Nelson, *The Intimate Connection: Male Sexuality, Masculine Spirituality* (London: SPCK, 1992), pp. 54-57.

97. VAB c. 10, p. 21; VWB c. 1, par. 3, pp. 447-48. Cf. Matter, *Voice of My Beloved*, pp. 168-70.

98. *Sermo* passim. Cf. VGA bk. 2, c. 2, par. 49, p. 386.

99. VAB c. 7, p. 18. Cf. Luke 12: 49 and Psalm 38: 3-4.

100. VAR bk. 2, c. 3, par. 20, p. 621. Cf. VAR bk. 2, c. 3, par. 22, p. 621.

101. Turner, *Eros and Allegory*, pp. 89-125; Matter, *Voice of My Beloved*, pp. 49-85.

the men as "black but beautiful," or "the loveliest of the daughters of Jerusalem."[102] Male saints, as much as their female contemporaries, longed for direct union with Christ, rather than simply a union mediated through a feminine Maria or *Ecclesia*.[103]

The use of the language of *eros* to describe union with the divine occurs more frequently in the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* than of their male contemporaries. Certainly *erotic* metaphor is a prominent theme in the *lives* and writings of holy women throughout Europe in the high and later Middle Ages, but it cannot be claimed as an exclusively feminine theme. Instead, sensual images were present in masculine devotion and are even present when describing masculine devotion to the crucified Christ. As a literary genre, hagiography communicates in the language of symbol and metaphor. It is clear that male monastic audiences read the *vitae mulierum*, and may have looked upon the women as models for their own religious behaviour. If the saint served as a universal subject, that is a model to which an entire audience, regardless of age, education or gender, was intended to relate, the prevalent use of erotic language in the *vitae* of women needs no explanation: the female subject represented the yearnings of every Christian soul.

Eucharistic Devotion: The growing devotion to the Eucharist in the high Middle Ages called for a new emphasis on the doctrine of transubstantiation. As well as reinforcing the importance of the physical in Christian practice, the instances of eucharistic devotion found in the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* often illustrate the physical change from bread to flesh that took place at the moment of consecration. For example, Marie saw a child appear whenever a devout priest celebrated Mass.[104] Margaret and Ida of Nivelles both saw Jesus descend upon the altar when witnessing the sacrament.[105] It is not only in instances

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102. VAR bk. 1, c. 5, par. 37, p. 616; VNC par. 5, p. 279.

103. *Sermo* 3 c.1, par. 1. Cf. Astell, *Song of Songs*, pp. 73-81.

104. VMO bk. 2, c.1, par. 72, p. 655.

105. VMY 2, pp. 107-08; VIN c. 29. Cf. Browe, *Die Eucharistischen Wunder*; Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 154-61, 255-59; idem, *Jesus as Mother*, pp. 256-58.

affirming transubstantiation that the *vitae* of female saints are considered remarkable, but scholars have noted that the role of the Eucharist in the *vitae* of holy women was generally more pronounced than in the *vitae* of their male contemporaries.[106] In the *vitae* of the Liègeoise *mulieres sanctae*, Ida of Nivelles and Christina suffered physical anguish when denied the Eucharist.[107] In the same way, Lutgard lived for a time on the Eucharist alone.[108] Ida of Louvain experienced physical torment in anticipation of the Eucharist.[109] Juette of Huy was so distraught at not being able to receive the sacrament that John the Evangelist came and celebrated Mass.[110] The intense yearning that these women felt for the flesh of their Saviour was expressed in the language of *eros* to a much more significant degree than the *lives* of their male contemporaries. The longing that these women felt for the flesh of their Saviour was so intense that when their cravings were satisfied, the result was virtual inebriation with an unearthly sweetness.[111]

Modern scholars have postulated that women were symbolically connected with the Eucharist. Through lactation, female bodies provided the first food that almost any individual encountered. As such, the life-giving properties of women's bodies were obvious. At the same time, medieval redemptive theology dictated that through his physical body, Christ gave life to the world.[112] It is logical, therefore, that women were thought to be able

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106. Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, p. 146; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp. 120-148, 168-224. Vauchez, *Spiritualité*, pp. 147-50; Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls*, pp. 171-74; Griffin, "*Ex exemplis illustribus*," p. 328.

107. VCM c.1, par. 10, p. 652; ibid c. 2, par. 22, p. 654; VIN c. 29

108. VLA bk. 2, c. 2, par. 19, p. 248.

109. VIL bk. 1, c. 4, par. 21, p. 163.

110. VJH c. 34, par. 96, p. 881.

111. VCM c. 2, par. 17, p. 653; VIL bk. 1, c. 3, par. 13-19, pp. 162-63; VLA bk. 2, c. 2, par. 19, p. 248. Cf. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 115-19.

112. The *Gnadenvita* of Friedrich Sunder includes an example of the male Friedrich feeding the Christ-child from his breasts. The hagiographer of the *Gnadenvita* explicitly states that the imagery of breast feeding is transforming ineffable mysteries into a language that is part of human experience ("what the suckling of the two breasts means, that which must be shown to our senses with bodily things..." quoted in, Hamburger, *Visuals and the Visionary*, pp. 146, 509, n. 78).

to relate to the physicality of Christ, who, in the incarnation took flesh and through his passion gave life to his Church.

The eucharistic devotion of these women had an intensely somatic character. The *mulieres sanctae* felt *physical* longings to be united *physically* with the *physical* body of their Saviour. Hagiography speaks in the language of symbols. These instances would have emphasised union with God as the ultimate end of the Christian journey. More importantly, given the contemporary Cathar heresy, the corporeal spirituality of the new saints would have illustrated that this union could take place through the flesh. Instead of being under the control of an evil deity, in thirteenth-century *vitae*, the physical body was a powerful tool in achieving holiness.

In light of the intense eucharistic devotion of the high Middle Ages the association between holy women and the Eucharist is remarkable. However, its exclusivity has been exaggerated. As is demonstrated in Chapter Three, the Eucharist also played a central role in the *vitae* of some Villers brothers, particularly those who had not received the Sacrament of orders. Richard Kieckhefer suggests that the reason for eucharistic miracles occurring more frequently in the *vitae* of women, is that many male saints would have been clerics and eucharistic miracles would be somewhat distracting while celebrating Mass or performing other liturgical duties.[113] Numerous accounts from the high Middle Ages support Kieckhefer's argument. In his *vita* of John of Cantimpré, Thomas de Cantimpré recounts the tale of a distracting eucharistic miracle. Walter of Flos, a man known for his vociferous doubts in the sacrament of the altar, was attending Mass. At the moment of elevation the priest observed the consecrated bread had taken human form. He, understandably, cried out in surprise. First, the assembled canons, then the people clamoured for a glimpse of the bread turned flesh. The ensuing chaos grew when the divine homunculus began to

113. As is indicated by the tale of Joseph Copertino, a priest who regularly levitated at the moment of consecration, this does not seem to have been an immediate concern in the early modern period.

age visibly. Walter became convinced of the efficacy of the sacrament. He immediately converted to orthodoxy and spent time on crusade as penance for his sins.[114]

Eucharistic devotion in the *vitae* of clerics was problematic even without distracting miracles. The *vita* of Herman Joseph recounts that Herman's Masses were typically prolonged by his eucharistic ecstasies. Eventually, Herman's mystical experiences became so problematic that it was difficult to find anyone who would agree to serve Mass when he presided.[115] The *Chronica villariensis* recounts that the abbot William reprimanded his prior, saying that his desire to receive the Eucharist was interfering with his duties. William requested that the prior receive the sacrament only on a Sunday.[116]

Thomas intended this tale to support, rather than to detract from the growing eucharistic fervour and Herman's hagiographer recounted his eucharistic ecstasies to demonstrate his extreme piety. The author of the *Chronica* claimed simply to be reporting a fact. However, all three accounts illustrate the potential problems of having eucharistic devotion as a prominent *topos* in the *vitae* of those with liturgical responsibility. As women were barred from receiving the sacrament of orders, it is far from surprising that eucharistic devotions in the form of ecstasies and yearning are more common in the *lives* of women than either priests or men who had liturgical obligations. As *conversi* were not ordained and less likely than choir monks to have liturgical responsibility, it is not surprising that eucharistic miracles in the Villers corpus occur frequently in the *vitae* of the *conversi*.

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114. VIC bk. 1, c. 10, pp. 264-65. Cf. BUA bk. 2, c. 40, par. 2, pp. 399-400.

115. VHJ c. 6, par. 34-35, pp. 700-01.

116. CV p. 203. However, it is surprising that there are not more miracles that occur when a priest ran into difficulty celebrating the sacrament or when attending, rather than celebrating Mass. Jacques de Vitry's *Historia Occidentalis* records an *exemplum* of a priest who had mistakenly consecrated two hosts. As he was debating whether to consume one or both, the second disappeared (J. F. Hinnebush, *The Historia Occidentalis of Jacques de Vitry.* A critical edition. Spicilegium Friburgense, 17 (Fribourg, 1972), p. 207).

The laity would have related differently to the body of Christ than the clergy who regularly mediated the miracle of transubstantiation. Eucharistic devotion is a *topos* of the few extant *vitae* of holy laymen. The Eucharist was central to the religious devotion of the lay Elezear of Sabran.[117] Francis of Assisi wrote that he could overlook the sins of the clergy, because "in this world, [he] could not see the Son of God alone," but required the sacrament of the Mass, which "they receive and alone administer to others."[118] These instances of eucharistic devotion in lay *vitae* support clerical status, in that they portray a need for a priesthood to enact the sacraments.

The idea that hagiographic portrayals of devotion to the Eucharist occur more commonly in the *vitae* of lay people cannot be substantiated without more research.[119] However, it is clear, at this point, that portrayals of eucharistic devotion differ in the *vitae* of male and female saints. Both the intense longing for the Eucharist and belligerent efforts to coerce the local clergy into administering the Sacrament that are common in the *vitae* of female saints are conspicuously absent from the Villers *vitae*. This is easily explained by social circumstance. Although many of these men, particularly the *conversi*, were themselves unable to celebrate Mass, they would have lived in a monastic milieu,

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117. De S. Elezear, c. 2, par. 23, p. 582. Thomas de Cantimpré recounts an instance in which a young knight who had lost faith in his worthiness to enter religious life had his confidence restored through being given bread and wine by Christ (BUA bk. 2, c. 57, par. 26, pp. 557-58). Cf. Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls*, p. 172. The Eucharist was central to the devotional lives of men in early modern Europe. It is improbable that Joseph of Copertino (+1663) was either the only or the first priest to be lifted from the ground at the moment of consecration.

118. Francis of Assisi, *Writings and Early Biographies: English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis*, ed. Marion A. Habig (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), p. 67. Cf. VIC bk.1, c. 7-8, 10 pp. 262-65. Francis was a religious brother, but he intended that his order be comprised of pious laymen.

119. Cf. Astell, "Introduction," pp. 1-26.

and been able to attend Mass regularly.[120] The Mass, while undoubtedly central to the devotion of holy women, would not have been a part of their daily routine.

Eucharistic miracles associated with male saints often include tales of the punishments of priests who celebrated the Sacrament unworthily.[121] The *Liber miraculorum* narrates a tale in which the Eucharist rebuked a sacrilegious priest who was celebrating Mass. After the consecration and before he had received Communion, the bread and wine, now the Body and Blood of Christ, vanished, an obvious testament to the unworthiness of this man to celebrate the Sacrament.[122] The contrite priest immediately approached his confessor and received absolution for his sins. While such *exempla* would have been useful in collections of edifying miracle stories, they are rare in hagiography. As would be expected, sacrilegious clergy were not often the subjects of *vitae*.

Gender is Neither the Only nor the most Influential Factor

Somatic Religious Devotion: The Liègeoise *vitae* of both male and female saints depict their subjects' vicarious sufferings as a form of *imitatio Christi*. On Good Friday, Alice received a vision of Christ crucified: his body weakened, pierced and drenched in his own blood. Christ begged Alice to remember what he had endured and asked her to imitate him. In a similar instance, the crucified Saviour reminds Lutgard, "See what I have done for sinners? I wish that you would do the same."[123] In keeping with the theme

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120. "Quotiescumque autem poterat, sanctarum celebrationi Missarum intererat; dominicisque noctibus atque in Sanctorum festivitatibus, pulsatis at Matutinas campanis, impiger ad ecclesiam convolabat" (VAR bk. 1, c. 1, par. 5, p. 609). Laybrothers were obliged to attend the sacrament of the Eucharist regularly, and to attend matutinal Mass, where they would have had the opportunity for communion regularly (UC c. 4-5, pp. 62-64; *Breve et Memoriale Scriptum* c. 2, p. 156). In 1184 Villers received papal permission for Mass to be celebrated on the Villers grange farms, giving the Villers *conversi* even more opportunities to receive the sacrament (AGR 10966, f. 63 r-v).

121. Though the efficacy of the sacrament was not contingent on the virtue of the celebrant, priests were admonished to restrain from celebrating Mass when not in a state of grace.

122. Herbert, "De Miraculis," bk. 3, c. 23, c. 1371. Cf. BUA, bk. 2, c. 32, par. 3, pp. 389-90.

123. VLA bk. 2, c. 1, par. 9.

of saints imitating Christ's redemptive suffering, Alice received a gold cross, which she interpreted as a call to share in Christ's sufferings and Christina of St. Trond suffered for those making posthumous satisfaction for their sins, in accordance with the request she had received directly from Christ.[124]

Towards the end of Christina's *vita*, Thomas includes a passage that emphasises the importance of the flesh in the journey towards holiness:

> O sweetest body! Why have I beaten you? Why have I reviled you? Did you not obey me in every good deed which I undertook after receiving divine inspiration? You have endured the torments and hardships which the spirit imposed on you, most generously and most patiently.[125]

This passage is typical of the *vitae* of the Liègeoise *mulieres sanctae*. Many of the *vitae mulierum* portray physical illness or asceticism as purifying the body, and thus allowing the saints to progress on their journey towards holiness.[126] In addition, these texts commonly emphasise the weakness of their bodies, in order to praise the strength of God.[127] For these women, the words of Paul seem true: "*...cum enim infirmior tunc potens sum...*"[128]

Scholars have deepened their understanding of the high Middle Ages through focussing on the significance of somatic spirituality. However, to date, most of the work in this area has been focussed on women.[129] It is true that even a cursory glance leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that corporeality was a defining feature of the religious behaviour depicted

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124. VAS c. 2, par. 8-9, p. 479; VCM c. 1, par. 7, p. 652. Cf. McNamara, "Need to Give," p. 216

125. "O dulcissimum corpus! Quare verberavi te? Quare convicia intuli tibi? Numquid obedisti mihi omne opus bonum, quod Deo auctore aggressa sum facere? Tu tormenta, tu labores benignissime ac patientissime pertulisti, quae spiritus imponebat" (VCM c. 5, par. 48, p. 658). Cf. VMY par. 17, pp. 114-15; Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, p. 237

126. VMY par. 45, p. 126. Cf. VLA bk. 2, c. 1, par. 19, p. 248.

127. "Cum autem quodam tempore corpusculum ejus fervorem spiritus jam amplius sustinere non posset" (VMO bk. 1, c. 4, par. 40, p. 647).

128. 2 Cor 12:10.

129. Bynum, "...And Woman His Humanity" p. 151; idem, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 113-86; Hollywood, *Soul as Virgin Wife*, pp. 27-28; Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist*, pp. 111-13; Heene, "Deliberate Self-Harm," pp. 214-15.

in the high medieval *vitae sanctarum.* While scholarly attention has focussed on the importance of corporeal spirituality to feminine religious practice, the role of the body in the *vitae* of holy men in the later Middle Ages has not yet been the subject of sufficient study.[130]

It is often pointed out that many of the traditional forms of *imitatio Christi*, such as itinerant preaching or begging, were not available to women. Modern scholars believe that rather than directly opposing social strictures, many women practised *imitatio Christi* by imitating Christ's physical sufferings. While their theory undoubtedly contains an element of truth, it does not automatically render vicarious suffering feminine. It is important to recall that the Pauline principle of strength in weakness was both written by, and originally applied to a man. While modern scholarship views somatic spirituality, particularly physical suffering, as typical of medieval holy women, medieval hagiographers saw no great difficulty in praising the asceticism of their male subjects. Many of the Villers *vitae* portray their subjects engaging in various forms of asceticism such as self-flagellation, fasting, or variations on wearing a hair shirt. Rather than presenting these as simply wanton acts of self-inflicted violence, the *vitae* depict suffering as playing a role in the spiritual journeys of holy men. Like their female contemporaries, the *sancti viri* of the high Middle Ages used their corporeal flesh to achieve greater heights of sanctity.

This is particularly true for the Villers knights. As is discussed in Chapter Three, the hagiographers of these men praise their physical strength and military prowess from the very beginning of their *vitae*. Though their military and chivalrous activity stops upon entry to religious life, their *vitae* continue to emphasise the physical aspects of their devotion, either through illustrating penitential asceticism or active service to the poor.

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130. For a discussion of ascetic men see, Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion*, pp. 97-106, esp. 98-99, n. 144. For the role of the body in the devotional practices of late antiquity see, Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 222-35.

Unlike their knightly contemporaries, the bodies of the penitent sinners are almost unmentioned in the first section of their *vitae*. However, after these men enter religious life, their bodies become central to their devotional practice. As is described in the previous chapter, the first book of the *vita Arnulfi* reads as a veritable litany of horrors: Arnulfus fashions clothing from the skins of hedgehogs, eats food intended for the dogs, rolls naked in nettles and brambles and spends several sleepless nights in prayer. By the end of the second book of the *vita Arnulfi*, Arnulfus is portrayed as a visionary who is loved by all. This portrait differs considerably from the penitent who entered Villers. Arnulfus' physical asceticism is central to his spirituality at the beginning of the text, and virtually unmentioned at the end. When Arnulfus' religious behaviour changes, Goswin makes no apology for the extreme character of his early devotion. Instead, through recording instances of the visions which rewarded Arnulfus' asceticism, Goswin implies that it was *through* his extreme asceticism that Arnulfus was able to reach the heights of sanctity.

Arnulfus clearly progresses through and beyond the initial stage of his conversion. His physical asceticism is both the first step and a seemingly necessary component of this change. Rather than making the role of the body explicit, Goswin portrays what, at first glance, could be taken as a quasi-dualistic contempt for the body:

> ...my flesh is my enemy and is all the more contemptible for being closer to me. My flesh is as that of an ass, which needs to be pierced and constrained so that it does not enjoy its own desires and send me to the abyss of death.[131]

Obviously, Goswin was less concerned than Jacques de Vitry about Cathar doctrines; however, as is often noted to be the case for the *mulieres sanctae*, in the *vita Arnulfi* Goswin emphasises the body as an integral part of the spiritual journey. Though Arnulfus speaks of conquering his flesh, that is, overcoming his carnal desires, he endeavours to do

131. "...caro mea hostis meus sit, tanto magis mihi formidandus, quanto magis mihi vicinior est. Jumentum carnis meae stimulus pungi et arctari necesse est, ne lasciviat et me pertrahat in mortis voraginem" (VAR bk. 1, c. 2, par. 14, p. 611).

so through his body. Arnulfus' flagellation, fasting, vigils and other self-inflicted torments allow him to progress to new heights on his journey towards God.[131]

As well as facilitating his journey towards God, Arnulfus' flesh allows Goswin to identify him with Christ. Rather than being portrayed as feminine, Goswin identifies Arnulfus' physical asceticism with the masculinity of Christ's body. Using language and imagery which are similar to the hagiographic depictions of *virago*, or "virile woman," Goswin praises Arnulfus' *manly* strength in imitating Christ's passion.[133] In the second section of the *vita*, after Goswin has ceased to discuss Arnulfus' self-punishment, he moves to more feminine descriptions of the saint.[134] Using a gender inversion reminiscent of the "virile woman," he portrays Arnulfus as a "bride of Christ."

The parallels between Arnulfus and a *virago* are particularly curious in light of the fluid gender imagery that is often noted in Cistercian writings from the later Middle Ages. As Caroline Walker Bynum has pointed out, Cistercian writers often portrayed authority, particularly religious authority, as being connected with nurturing. Cistercian Abbots were often describe as "mothers," and were seen as having a formative, or maternal, responsibility for caring for the souls of the monks in their monastery.[135] Similarly, Martha Newman has drawn attention to an instance in which the holiness of a Cistercian woman is emphasised by depicting her with qualities normally ascribed to a Cistercian abbot.[136] Like the *viragines* of early *passio* literature, the monks were depicted as having experienced a complete gender transformation in their path to holiness.

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132. Cf. VAR bk. 1, c. 2, par. 12, p. 611; ibid bk. 1, c. 3, par. 22, p. 613.

133. "...sequebatur *viriliter* Dominum Christum ad passionem..." (VAR bk. 1, c. 4, par. 31, pp. 614-15). Italics mine. Cf. VAR bk. 1, c. 1, par. 6, pp. 609-10; VAR bk. 1, c. 4, par. 31, pp. 614-15; VAB c. 18; VMY c. 7; VIN c. 3; Newman, "Crucified by the Virtues," pp. 189-95.

134. Cf. Martha Newman, "Real Men and Imaginary Women: Engelhard of Langheim Considers a Woman in Disguise," *Speculum* 78 (2003): 1203-04.

135. Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, pp. 154-62.

136. Newman, "Real Men and Imaginary Women," pp. 1184-1213.

As in the *life* of Arnulfus, physical asceticism seems important in other Villers *vitae*. Following his description of Werricus' secret torments such as self-flagellation and the wearing of a hair shirt, his hagiographer describes a vision, in which Werricus saw a sevenfold light and heard a voice saying,

> The body that you have now is cumbersome and bitter. After this life, you will see clearly with a sevenfold light, and through that light, you will see that the same body has shone for you.[137]

The *vita Werrici* acknowledges that the state of being separate from God was one of suffering. However, in stark contrast to dualist philosophy, it portrays the physical world and physicality as tools which facilitate the journey towards God. In his vision, Werricus is assured that he will someday understand the important role that his physical body has played in his earthly journey towards salvation. By depicting this vision immediately following his account of Werricus' asceticism, his hagiographer implies that it was through his physical torments that Werricus' body was instrumental in his spiritual advancement.

The Villers *vitae conversorum* portray their subjects engaged in acts of physical asceticism of the type that are predominantly perceived as feminine. Indeed, the traditional picture of the *conversi* as being from the lower social echelons of society and generally illiterate would place these men in a "feminine," that is, a powerless, social position. Like their female contemporaries, *conversi* were permanently in a lay state and many would not hold any significant authority.[138] Such arguments about the feminisation of powerless men are compelling and undoubtedly contain an element of truth; however they do not provide a complete explanation for the inclusion of so-called feminine religious behaviour in their *vitae*. The religious behaviour of the noble Gobertus of Aspremont has elements that are akin to those commonly regarded as feminine in modern scholarship and

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137. "Corpus erit quod habes onerosum nunc et amarum,/Post istam vitam septemplice lumine clarum,/ Ultra quam lux sit quam respicis et tibi luxit" (VWA pp. 454-55).

138. Newman, "Crucified by the Virtues," pp. 182-89.

the evidence supporting the universal lower social standing of the lay brothers is, at best, fragmentary.[139]

In addition to facilitating progress towards holiness, hagiographic depictions of the signs of holiness are often located on a saint's body. While this has long been recognised, it has almost exclusively been explored in relation to medieval holy women.[140] The bodies of female saints often behaved in an extraordinary way. Elisabeth of Spaalbeek lost control of her limbs while praying. Christina of St. Trond did the same; moreover, she floated to the rafters during her funeral Mass and later fed herself through miraculous lactation.[141] Lutgard of Aywières' hands exuded oil with healing properties.[142] Margaret of Ypres was often so overcome in prayer that she was unable to stand and had to be supported by angels.[143] Ida of Nivelles was unable to pass the altar without collapsing from joy.[144] Moreover, the devotional practices of female saints are often similar to public spectacle. It was not licit for these women to engage in preaching, however, they could enact truth

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139. There are two frequently cited stories of Bernard of Clairvaux chiding *conversi* for believing themselves the equals of monks. However, in these examples it appears that Bernard was chiding the individuals, rather than making general statements about *conversi*. Cf. Lekai, *Cisterciens*, pp. 338-39. An 1188 statute of the Chapter General preventing nobles from joining the laybrotherhood shows that it was a common occurrence (*Statuta* 1188 c. 8, p. 108; cf. *Twelfth-century Statutes*, 1188, c. 10, p. 151). As Osheim and Berman have noted, the statute does not seem to have been observed (Osheim, "Conversion," p. 378; Berman, *Medieval Agriculture*, pp. 166-67). Both the *Usus Conversorum* and the *Regula Conversorum* devote considerable attention to the devotional practices that the order expected of its *conversi* (UC c. 1, 2, pp. 57-60; UC c. 5, pp. 63-64; UC c. 8, pp. 66-68; RC c. 1, 2, 3, 7). The *vita Abundi* depicts a young novice who is frightened to join the *conversi* as he feels spiritually unprepared to conform to its *cursus* (VAB c. 19, pp. 30-31). In 1184 Villers was given permission to build chapels on its granges so that its *conversi* might more fully observe the liturgical duties associated with monasticism (AGR 10966, 63 r-v) Cf. DM t. 1, bk. 4, c. 63, pp. 264-65; Ibid t. 1, bk. 4, c. 85, pp. 286-87; ibid t.1, bk. 4, c. 100, pp. 308-09; ibid, t. 2, bk. 8, c. 96, pp. 98-100. Platt, *Monastic Grange*, pp. 76-77; Hallinger, "Woher kommen die Laienbruder?," pp. 1-104.

140. Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, p. 195; Cynthia Ho, "*Corpus Delecti*: The Edifying Dead in the *Exempla* of Jacques de Vitry," in *Medieval Sermons and Society*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse, Beverly Kienzle, Debra Stoudt, and Anne Thayer (Louvain-La-Neuve: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, 1998), pp. 203-18.

141. VCM c. 1, par. 6, p. 651 (floating); ibid c. 2, par. 19, p. 654 (lactation).

142. VLA bk. 1, c. 1, par. 12, p. 239.

143. VMY 21, p. 117.

144. VIN c. 29.

with their flesh, that is, become living examples of God's word.[145] Often less extraordinary physical phenomena, in particular illness and infirmity were regarded both as a sign of sanctity and something which set women apart from their physical community.

While modern scholars generally agree that medieval holy men do not languish, the sanctity of holy men was still illustrated through their bodies, in particular, through their physical strength. Dominant theories of masculinity have examined themes such as "strength," "power," "ability," and the opposite of these ideals, "vulnerability," "humility," "weakness" are often considered feminine.[146] This seems to apply equally to modern or at least later-twentieth-century social theory and to what is found in medieval texts. When examining the *topos* of physical infirmity, we find that the hagiographic evidence roughly corresponds to the aforementioned theories. While suffering was an important devotional theme for men during the high Middle Ages, the same does not appear to be true for other somatic forms of religious expression, predominantly physical infirmity. Although illness was conspicuous in the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae*, it is almost entirely absent from the Villers *vitae*.[147] Instead, the Villers hagiographers seem to idealise theoretical masculine power and strength, particularly when used for the greater glory of God.

The previous chapter has outlined the Villers *vitae militum*, which praise their subjects for using their divine gifts of physical strength in defence of Christendom, their fellow

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145. "...For now the illiterate man or woman can read, not in parchment or documents, but in the members and the body...a living image and an animated history of redemption, as if he or she were literate" *Vita Elizabeth sanctimonialis in Erkenrode, Ordinis Cisterciensis, Leodiensis diocesis*, in *Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum bibliothecae Regiae Bruxellensis*, vol. 1 (Brussels: 1886), p. 373. Translated and quoted in Simons, "Reading a Saint's Body," p. 11. Cf. ibid, pp. 11-20; Robertson, "The Corporeality of Female Sanctity," pp. 268-87; Suydam, "Beguine Textuality," pp. 169-210.

146. Brittan, *Masculinity and Power*, pp. 1-17, 77-107; Morgan, *Discovering Men*, p. 62; Hale, *Controversies in Sociology*, pp. 104-06. Cf. Cadden, *Meaning of Sex Difference*, pp. 185-87; Murray, "'The law of sin'," pp. 11-12.

147. According to a ninth-century Irish text, *De Arries*, either men or women, could substitute a month of earthly illness for a year of purgatorial torment (Carpenter, "A New Heaven," p. 201, n. 14).

148. VGA bk. 1, c. 1, par. 10, p. 379; VWB c. 1, par. 1, p. 447.

Christians or the name of Christ. Like saints whose bodies were weakened by physical illness, the extraordinary physical strength of the Villers knights set them apart from their society. Saints such as Charles, Gobertus or Walter were not called to pray in isolation; instead, these men were depicted defending justice on crusade or winning honours for their *domina,* the Blessed Virgin, in tournaments.[148] Moreover, through their gifts of strength and military capability the Villers knights, like those called to the ascetic life, used their bodies in God's service. Though extraordinary in their physicality, the knights cannot properly be said to belong to the physical—that is the secular—world. They followed the injunction of Paul, being in the world, but not of it.

In the *vitae* of knights, the body was both a place where the saints' holiness was made visible and a tool that enabled the saints to carry out their journey towards God. Similarly, other models of sainthood which are illustrated in the Villers *vitae* also portray the body as a locus of sanctity. Like Elisabeth and Christina, Arnulfus' ecstasies caused him to lose control of his limbs and to frolic in pure joy.[149] Often after visionary experiences, Arnulfus was transported to a place outside his mundane existence. As he was focussed entirely on heaven at these moments, Arnulfus neither cared nor noticed that he entered uncontrollable fits of laughter, or capered like a madman. Goswin also relates that Arnulfus, like St. Dominic, would pray by prostrating himself on the ground, or making a deep bow during his conversation with his Lord.[150]

The liminality of holy women is often emphasised through their bodies. The *topos* of physical infirmity can be understood as a means of emphasising the holy women as liminal figures between the worlds of the living and the dead. Though they still lived in the

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149. VAR bk. 2, c. 3, par. 23-24, p. 613; VCM c. 1, par. 16, p. 653; ibid c. 3, par. 35, p. 656. Cf. Simons, "Reading a Saint's Body," pp. 10-23.

150. VAR bk. 2, c. 2, par. 13, p. 619. Cf. *The Nine Ways of Prayer of St. Dominic. Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*, ed. Simon Tugwell, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1982) 94-103.

world, they were not wholly a part of it. Alice of Schaerbeek was stricken with leprosy and her physical illness was such that her sisters required her to live in a separate hut on the convent grounds and to stand apart from the community in Church; some people considered Christina of St. Trond to be possessed.[151] Like these women, Arnulfus managed to alienate himself from his monastic family through his extravagant acts of penitence. His torments with a hair shirt and chains eventually left their mark on his flesh. His skin turned black and began to emit such a stench that his monastic brothers could not bear his company. Like Alice, Arnulfus retired to a "bridal chamber," that is, a small hut on the monastery grounds where he was free to pass his day contemplating his beloved.[152]

It is clear from the Liègeoise *vitae* that the connection between femininity and asceticism that modern scholars assumed to have existed in the high Middle Ages has been exaggerated. Instead, both male and female saints from this period used their physical flesh as a tool which could facilitate their journey towards heaven. Moreover, both male and female saints (though seldom clergy) directed their physical asceticism towards making satisfaction for sin, both their own transgressions and those of others.

Throughout Christian history, sanctity has been demonstrated through dramatic acts of penitence. For example, Mary Magdalene spent time fasting and praying in the desert, Anthony fasted and fought with demons and Simeon Stylites spent his life praying on a pillar.[153] Despite an increasing emphasis on clerical authority, it would seem that the connection between physical penitence and holiness continued in thirteenth-century Liège. In his prologue to his *life* of Marie, Jacques de Vitry tells us explicitly that this text was writ-

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151. VAS c. 2, par. 9, p. 479; VCM c. 2, par. 18-19, pp. 653-54. Cf. Cawley, "Life of Alice," pp. 299-327; Newman, "Possessed by the Spirit," pp. 733-70.

152. VAR bk. 1, c. 5, par. 39, p. 616. Cf. VNC c. 5; Cawley, "Life of Alice," pp. 299-327.

153. Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 14-16.

ten for Fulk of Toulouse, who was impressed by the austerities that the Liègeoise women were prepared to inflict upon themselves in the name of Christ.[154]

The high Middle Ages recognised the piety and authority of the priestly office. Even corrupt priests, by virtue of having received the sacrament of orders, served as, sometimes controversial, mediators between the human and divine. Hence, the hagiographers of clerical saints rarely were forced to justify their subjects' public ministry. The same was not true for lay saints. In the *vitae* of those who were unable or unwilling to accept sacramental orders, hagiographers often illustrated their subjects' willingness to serve Christ through physical asceticism which was often directed towards making satisfaction for sin.[155] Both the willingness of saints to inflict torments on their own bodies and their ability, like Christ, to assume responsibility for making satisfaction for the sins of the human race through their own bodies, led to the popular conception of these ascetics as powerful.[156]

Christians in the high Middle Ages seemed increasingly concerned about the fate of those who had died before completing satisfaction for their sins and were consigned to purgatory.[157] Despite being widely hailed as a feminine form of devotion, purgatorial piety seems to have pervaded popular consciousness and is commonly depicted in *vitae* of both men and women from the high Middle Ages.[158] In addition to graphic hagiographic

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154. "Unde cum sanctus et venerabilis Pater, Ecclesiae Tolosanae Episcopus, a civitate sua ab haereticis depulsus, ad partes Galliae petiturus auxilium contra inimicos fidei devenisset, et tandem usque in Episcopatum Leodii, quasi tractus odore et fama quorumdam, Deo in vera humilitate militantium, descendisset; non cessabat admirari fidem et devotionem, maxime sanctarum mulierum, quae summo desiderio et reverentia Christi Ecclesiam et sanctae Ecclesiae Sacramenta venerabantur" (VMO prologue par. 2, p. 636).

155. Vauchez, *Sainthood*, pp. 190-93.

156. As Esther Cohen points out, "the living saints of late medieval Europe were not expressing the same sort of power: it was not the ability to control the body but the capacity to channel the suffering from sinners to their own bodies...In those cases expressions of pain were anything but self-indulgence. They were proof-positive of the saint's power" (Cohen, "The Animated Pain," p. 62).

157. Brian Patrick McGuire, "Purgatory, the Communion of Saints and Medieval Change," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, Volume 20 (1989): 61-84. Cf. Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*; Schmitt, *Les revenants;* Gurevich, "Popular and Scholarly Medieval Cultural Traditions," pp. 71-90.

158. Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, pp. 79-80.

portrayals of purgatorial suffering such as Christina's self-immersion in icy waters or Arnulfus' variations on hair shirts, it is worth examining less dramatic contemporary depictions of aiding the suffering souls. Thomas de Cantimpré, who had a particular interest in purgatorial doctrine, devoted a chapter of his *Bonum universale de apibus* to the ways in which the living could assist their loved ones in the afterlife. Thomas' list of efficacious behaviour included weeping, which is usually associated with women but could be carried out by either sex; prayer, fasting and vigils, which could be practised by both genders; giving alms and paying debts, which were more easily accomplished by men; and saying Mass, which was limited to ordained men. The *vitae* of priests often depict their subjects offering Mass for the souls of the dead.[159] The *vitae* of laypersons who did not have this option depict their subjects aiding the suffering souls through physical asceticism.

Scholars argue that purgatorial asceticism became common among women as they had no other means of helping those experiencing posthumous torment. As they did not control material property, women could not give alms. Similarly, women could not celebrate Mass. Their physical weakness meant that women could not take advantage of the purgatorial indulgence offered to crusaders. Although fewer opportunities for religious expression were available to women, the state of being powerless was not unique to the female sex. While most powerful individuals were male, being born male neither guaranteed authority nor sacramental orders. Men who held neither secular nor religious authority were in a powerless position, somewhat analogous to women.[160] As McNamara demonstrates is the case for later medieval holy women, the *vitae* of these men show them expressing

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159. "Liber secundus, seu vita et miraculis fratris Johannis Ruusbroec devotii et primi prioris Viridisvallis," AB 4 (Paris: société générale de librairie catholique, 1885), c. 3. Cf. BUA bk. 2, c. 53, par. 14, pp. 499-500.

160. Heene, "Deliberate Self-Harm," p. 228. Cf. Farmer, "The Beggar's Body," pp. 153-71; Idem, *Surviving Poverty*, pp. 39-73.

their love and concern for the welfare of their fellow humans by a kind of spiritual alms-giving, aiding in the redemption of others through their flesh.[161]

Scholars have directed significantly more attention to asceticism in the *vitae mulierum* than to *vitae* of contemporary holy men.[162] Certainly, self-torture stands out as one of the more prominent and disturbing themes in the *vitae* of medieval holy women. Christina tortured herself in fire and water, ate frogs and toads, and was hung on the gallows by her own hand; Marie cut flesh from the soles of her feet; Alice found comfort in losing body parts to leprosy. The female saints of the high Middle Ages were diligent in their acts on behalf of the suffering souls, yet their concern does not immediately render all acts of vicarious suffering or even purgatorial concern feminine. Although arguably less common, hagiographic portrayals of masculine asceticism are not unknown. When reading about Arnulfus' torments with nettles, Werricus' self-flagellation or Petrus' habit of pressing irons against his flesh, it quickly becomes apparent that medieval hagiographers did not view self-inflicted suffering as intrinsically connected to femininity. Instead, medieval texts portray both men and women engaged in acts intended to aid the suffering souls.

Like women, holy men from this period viewed suffering as being efficacious towards redemption. The *vita Arnulfi* relates a particular instance in which a monk from a nearby monastery sought Arnulfus, who was engaged in his customary scourging. The undoubtedly bemused gatekeeper informed the visitor that Arnulfus was "in his purgatory," but would be availably shortly. When told of his guest's arrival, Arnulfus, though drenched in blood, immediately came to the gatehouse and greeted his visitor cheerfully. The guest was understandably dismayed by Arnulfus' appearance, and expressed his horror that

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161. See McNamara, "The Need to Give," pp. 199-221.

162. Bouchard, *Every Valley*, p. 115; McNamara, "The Need to Give," pp. 199-221; Newman, *From VirileWoman to WomanChrist*, pp. 108-36; Carpenter, "A New Heaven and A New Earth," pp. 218-19; Sweetman, "Christine of St. Trond," pp. 411-32; idem, "Thomas Cantimpré, *Mulieres Religiosae* and Purgatorial Piety," pp. 616-20.

Arnulfus should retain such great hatred for his own flesh. Arnulfus, somewhat more orthodox than appearance would suggest, gently informed him that he was not putting his body to death, but his sin.[163]

The above incidents show that gender was not an essential influencing factor in hagiographic portrayals of asceticism. Instead, the new emphasis on the physical body in the high Middle Ages can be directly linked with the contemporary emphasis on Christ's humanity in didactic literature and theological treatises that is discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. The Christ that appears in devotional texts from the thirteenth century onwards was glorious in his fragility. In the earlier Middle Ages, Christ was primarily depicted as the Divine Word made flesh; in later medieval artistic and textual representations he was splendidly and affectively human. Scholars of medieval women's spirituality have examined the implications of a new emphasis on Christ's humanity for their devotional practices. As the above discussion shows, exploring the influence of emphasising Christ's humanity in the *vitae* of men from the same period promises to yield valuable insights.

Visionary Experiences: In the *vitae* of priests, the subjects' ordination gave them licence to preach, and automatically afforded them some measure of respect. In the *vitae* of lay saints, the hagiographers were required to illustrate that their subjects deserved to preach or had otherwise earned their authoritative status. In the high Middle Ages, visionary experiences became more widespread throughout western society. It was neither necessary to be formally educated nor to hold ecclesial office to receive a glimpse of heaven or be united with Christ. As a result, it was no longer unheard of for anyone, especially those who seemed most unworthy, to experience divine revelation. After a rather prolonged process to establish their divine origin, the words spoken by that individual soon

163. VAR bk. 1, c. 2 par. 13, p. 611. Cf. VAR bk. 1, passim.

took on some measure of authority within the community.[164] A cursory examination of Liègeois didactic texts is consistent with Weinstein and Bell's finding that visionary experiences are common in the *vitae* of saints who held low ecclesiastical positions or did not hold secular authority.[165] A hagiographic account of these saints' visionary experiences would have reinforced the saint as the recipient of divine favour, thus increasing the respect that he or she was afforded by the audience of the *vita*.

Visionary experiences are also commonly depicted in cases where a saint, regardless of gender or ecclesiastical position, engages in controversial forms of religious behaviour. For example, visionary experiences attest that Lutgard's fasting, Charles' knightly service and Arnulfus' physical asceticism was pleasing in the eyes of God. As Thomas Heffernan points out, inclusion in the hagiographic record shows that a particular behaviour or individual met with the approval of the church hierarchy.[166] A hagiographic account of a visionary experience which shows the saint receiving divine favour, despite or even because of his or her contentious devotional practice, both emphasised the saint as an instrument of God's will and reinforced the orthodoxy of the behaviour in question.

As many visionaries came from the lower social echelons of society, it is not surprising to find that they were also frequently uneducated. Education, particularly scholastic education, was held as ideal in both the religious and secular worlds. In the *vitae* of knights, nobles and even men from mercantile families, the hagiographer invariably stresses both the erudition and the intellectual prowess of his subject. Because of the importance which hagiographers assign to erudition, it is far from unexpected that the purpose of visionary experiences in the *vitae* of unlettered saints was frequently the transmission of knowledge.

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164. Brian Patrick McGuire, "Holy Women and Monks in the Thirteenth Century: Friendship or Exploitation?" *Vox Benedictina* 6 (1989): 343-73; Carpenter, "A New Heaven," pp. 87-89. Cf. Ahlgren, "Visions and Rhetorical Suffering," pp. 47-49.

165. Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, pp. 227-32.

166. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, p. 6.

In the Villers corpus, men such as Arnulfus and Nicholaos, learned through visionary, or supernatural means.[167] Like their contemporaries who were educated through more conventional means, these men obtained sufficient knowledge both to instruct the surrounding community and to engage explicitly in debates with learned masters of theology.

Modern scholars have explored the concept of visionary authority, but generally regarding its implications for the status of women. Throughout Europe, women such as Hildegard of Bingen, Elisabeth of Schonau and Brigit of Sweden gained positions of influence through their visionary abilities. Once a recognised Church official had authenticated their visionary abilities, such women could circumvent social strictures and speak with authority.[168] Many rose to positions of prominence in European society, and often served as advisors to religious and political leaders.[169]

These new prophetesses necessarily held lay status and were often affiliated with a religious order. They were sometimes married and often from the emerging mercantile class. The *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* are typical in that they both recount frequent visionary experiences and depict an intrinsic connection between visions and authority. In these texts, visionary experiences serve three principal functions: instigating new reli-

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167. Steven Kruger has noted that the ability to engage in learned discourse was integral to gaining public respect in clerical and non-clerical circles. He has considered intellectual prowess an essential component of the mercantile and Jewish identities that emerged in the high Middle Ages. (Steven Kruger, "Merchants and Jews"). John of Morigny is a male saint who is educated through visionary means and examples from Villers are discussed earlier in this chapter. (Fanger, "Plundering the Egyptian Treasure," pp. 242-49).

168. Ahlgren, "Visions and Rhetorical Suffering," pp. 47-49; King, "Prophetic Power," p. 29; Petroff, "Women and Mysticism," pp. 7-15; Bynum; "...And Woman," p. 259; Petroff, "Introduction,". p. 6; Blamires, *Case for Women*, pp. 194-95; Jane Chance, "Speaking in *Propria Persona*: Authorizing the Subject as a Political Act in Late Medieval Female Spirituality," in *Texts and Contexts*, ed. Juliette Dor, et al., pp. 270-71; Lauwers, "L'expérience béguinale," pp. 61-103; Newman, "Real Men and Imaginary Women," pp. 1209-11.

169. Catherine of Siena and Ursulina of Parma acted as unofficial advisors during the Avignon Schism (Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls*, pp. 162-63); Christina of St. Trond was advisor to count Louis of Looz (VCM c. 4, par. 41-44, p. 657).

gious behaviour;[170] providing divine assurance for a particular form of devotion;[171] imparting spiritual insights and foreknowledge.[172] As is made clear in Chapter Three of this thesis, these are three functions assigned to visionary experiences in the Villers *vitae*.

As has been observed with hagiographic portrayals of the visions of holy women, the *vitae* of visionary lay monks or *conversi* insisted that the subjects never spoke with their own authority. Instead, they are adamant that these men simply relayed messages from God and thereby served as channels between the human and the divine. These messages were often connected with the ideals of the Cistercian community. Later medieval hagiographers insisted on their subjects' orthodoxy. In this way, despite Jane Chance's arguments to the contrary, hagiography supported the existing ecclesiastical hierarchy.[173] While visionary ability was potentially dangerous, that potentiality was lessened in a visionary who submitted to ecclesiastical authority and who claimed simply to be a conduit for divine revelation. Nevertheless, hagiographic accounts of visionaries record indirect ways that visionaries taught, or held respect in their communities. This was often illustrated through the saints' lived religious behaviour, for example Christina's purgatorial torments. It has also been shown through song, notably in the *vita* of Marie d'Oignies.[174]

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170. VCM c. 1, par. 5-7, pp. 651-52; VJH c. 4, par. 16, p. 866. Cf. VJM bk. 1, c. 2, par. 6, pp. 445-46; McDonnell, *Beguines and Beghards*, pp. 305-10; Sweetman, "Christine of St. Trond," pp. 411-32

171. VLA bk. 2, c.1, par. 5, p. 237; VBN c. 12, pp. 66-68; VMY 12, p. 112. For a discussion of the role that fasting came to play in feminine piety see, Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 125, 195-96; Bell, *Holy Anorexia*.

172. VIN par. 21; VLA bk. 2, c. 3, par. 35, p. 25; VLA bk. 3, c. 2, par. 14, pp. 259-60; VMO bk. 2, c. 6, par. 57, pp. 651-52 (The soldiers of Henry I destroyed Liège, between the third and seventh of May, 1212. Humbert Ligny, *L'Occident Médiéval: La Belgique et L'Europe* (Bruxelles: Éditions Universitaires, 1947), pp. 186-87); VMY 27, pp. 119-20. Cf. VGS c. 2, par. 8, p. 535.

173. Chance, "Speaking in *Propria Persona*," pp. 269-94.

174. Muessig, "Prophecy and Song," pp. 146-58. Thomas de Cantimpré recounts a tale in which a woman, possibly Marie, informs her physician of her imminent death through song (BUA bk. 2, c. 3, par. 5, pp. 418-19). It is curious that song also plays a role in miraculous healing (BUA bk. 2, c. 29, par. 14, p. 289) and visionary experiences (VGS c. 2, par. 9, p. 534).

As well as having a social role, visions were important to the saints' personal spiritual journey. We recall that visions often heralded religious vocations or instigated new forms of religious expression. For example, a vision sends Godefridus the Sacristan from St. Pantathelon to Villers and visions inspire both Walter and Gobertus to leave military service.[175] Similarly, by providing assurance that a particular form of behaviour is pleasing in the eyes of heaven, hagiographic accounts of visionary experiences provide external justification for the saint continuing in a new or controversial form of religious behaviour. This is repeatedly shown in the Villers *vitae*. The Virgin presents Arnulfus with the Christ child after his period of asceticism.[176] Petrus experiences a vision assuring him that he was pleasing to God.[177] Abundus is repeatedly reminded of the Virgin's love.[178]

Like the *mulieres sanctae*, the Villers brothers were often privy to knowledge of future events. Arnulfus predicted the moment of a possessed woman's liberation; Simon could read the consciences of others and Abundus regularly provided spiritual guidance. Similarly, the visions in the Villers corpus were portrayed as being both useful to and recognised by the wider community. This is illustrated in that Blanche of Champagne received great benefit from her unquestioning obedience to Arnulfus' advice;[179] Gobertus experienced no hesitation in following Abundus' visionary direction; both clergy and laity sought vocational guidance from Arnulfus and Nicholaos was recognised for his ability to teach.[180]

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175. VGS c.1, par. 2, p. 534; VGA bk. 2, c. 1, par. 38, p. 383.

176. VAR bk. 2, c. 1, par. 9, p. 618.

177. VPC f. 89 r.

178. VAB c. 2, 8-14, passim.

179. VAR bk. 2, c. 4, par. 30-32, p. 623. Cf. VCM c. 4, par. 41-44, p. 657.

180. VNC c. 5, p. 280.

Ecclesiastical authority was connected with the ability to read Latin. The illiterate man could not say Mass and therefore, at least ideally and definitely in the minds of the Villers hagiographers, could not be ordained. Moreover, the illiterate required help reciting the Divine Office. For this reason they were problematic, though not uncommon, choir monks. Being illiterate not only limited the vocations a man could pursue, but officially barred him from the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Holding the position of abbot in a Cistercian monastery required the sacrament of orders. The plight of an unlettered man, even a noble, is illustrated by the example of Gobertus of Aspermont. Gobertus had held considerable secular authority before entering the Order. However, despite his wealth, secular power and earlier status as a patron of Villers, Gobertus was not permitted to be ordained and was subsequently denied official positions of authority.[181]

It is rare that medieval sources depict a man from the lower social echelons rising to a position of authority. Although the religious life, in theory, offered the same opportunities to all, the restrictions of age that were imposed by the Chapter General would have ensured that a man from a noble background could expect to obtain a position of authority more rapidly than his non-noble contemporaries.[182] As well as being more likely to have learned Latin, noblemen would have had influential connections, which could benefit almost any house. The immediate cause of authority held by a non-noble person, particularly one who was not educated, in a monastic community would have been unusual. In such instances, the hagiographer commonly provided an explanation, which often drew attention to the saint's visionary abilities.[183]

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181. VGA bk. 1, c. 3, par. 31. See also, AGR 10967 f. 30.

182. See above, c. 1, n. 63.

183. It would seem that in those instances where men did experience visions, these do not come across as such a dominant feature of their spirituality as in the lives of holy women. As is mentioned in Chapter Three, Francis of Assisi is most commonly recognised for his founding of the franciscan Order. Scholars also have devoted attention to his life of poverty and imitation of Christ, however, as

The quasi-feminisation of men who lacked social advantages is again shown in the later medieval attitude towards literacy. From an ecclesiastical viewpoint, there was a definite parallel between women and illiterate men: both were unable to receive the Sacrament of orders and thereby consigned to a permanent lay state. Both groups, therefore, were denied the active, masculine, sacramental role and remained perpetually passive, or feminine, in relation to the Eucharist and Confession.[184] Although both women and laymen lacked sacramental authority, the hagiographers of both groups illustrated their subjects acquiring authority through *topoi* such as visionary experiences and physical asceticism. Modern scholarship has noted this phenomenon in regards to female saints but ignored the fact that it appears equally true for their non-ordained male contemporaries. The established link between "*feminine* authority," rather than simply "authority," and visionary experiences attests to the relative proportions of attention given to male and female saints in the high Middle Ages.

Chivalry: Physical combat was an essentially masculine activity; spiritual warfare was not. The early martyrs, both male and female, were viewed as "Christian warriors" who fought to establish Christ's kingdom through the weapon of their bodies. *Passio* literature freely ascribed qualities of military bravery to both men and women. In the case of Perpetua, the *passio* writer presents a holy woman becoming a manly warrior physi-

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a male visionary he has been largely ignored. Bernard's visions are discussed less frequently than his revitalising the Cistercian reform and preaching of the Second Crusade.

184. Sharon Farmer has noted that medieval writers of didactic literature often drew implicit parallels between men of lower social standing and their female contemporaries: both groups were often associated with the body, both groups were hailed as examples of sexual immorality, and a virtuous member of either group could be used to chastise a male clerical audience (Farmer, "The Beggar's Body," pp. 153-64).

cally as well as allegorically.[185] Similar fluidity of gendered language can be seen in the *vitae* of the desert fathers and mothers: an early soldier of Christ was an individual who, regardless of gender, overcame the vices and frailties of the human flesh and in so doing helped to establish God's kingdom on earth.[186]

Despite the recent attention given to somatic expressions of devotion, the gendered devotional application of corporeal strength and military prowess remains largely ignored. The most obvious use of military imagery is in describing the religious practices available to men. From the twelfth century onwards, influential churchmen, notably Bernard of Clairvaux, promoted both crusading and the military orders. Pious laymen who had been endowed with the gifts of strength or skill at arms had a specific vocation to serve the Lord through using these talents to defend his people and his earthly kingdom, or even to earn an indulgence for a soul experiencing torment in purgatory.[187]

Overtly military devotional practices were not available to medieval women. Instead, wealthy women who wished to "be signed with the cross" were encouraged to support the crusading effort through persuading their husbands and sons to make the armed pilgrimage east, carrying out suffrages or prayers and particularly, through financial aid.[188] Providing monetary support was not an option for women from the lower social echelons of society; similarly men who did not have the material resources required of a knight, or

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185. Kerstin Aspegren, "The Male Woman: A Feminine Ideal in the Early Church," (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990), pp. 133-43; Rachel Moriarty, "'Playing the Man': The Courage of Christian Martyrs, Translated and Transposed," in *Gender and Christian Religion*, edited by R. N. Swanson, *Studies in Church History* 34 (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1998), pp. 1-11. Cf. Cadden, *Meaning of Sex Difference*, pp. 205-07. The same trend continued throughout the Middle Ages, and female saints such as Wilgefortis obtained masculine secondary sex characteristics to preserve religious virtue (Vern Bullough, "Sex Education in Medieval Christianity," *Journal of Sex Research* 13 (1977): 185-96).

186. Bugge, *Virginitas*, pp. 47-58. Cf. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 237-44.

187. Dunlop, "Masculinity, Crusading and Devotion," pp. 330-31; Richard Kieckhefer, "Holiness and the Culture of Devotion," in *Images of Sainthood*, pp. 288-90; McNamara, "The *Herrenfrage*," pp. 3-30; Morris, "Equestris Ordo," pp. 87-89.

188. For a discussion of women in support roles see, Caspi-Reisfeld, "Women Warriors," pp. 94-107.

simply lacked either physical strength or skill at arms had no place in the new crusading fervour. Rather than simply ignoring this aspect of the devotional climate, hagiographers of such individuals developed forms of religious behaviour in keeping with the changing mores of the period.

As is made clear in the previous chapter, military language and imagery is prominent in the Villers *vitae*. Some of the texts, particularly the *vitae militum*, portrayed the armed pilgrimage to the east as formative in their subjects' journey towards holiness. However, military imagery was not limited to physical warfare. In the *vitae conversorum* and the *lives* of men such as Godefridus Pachomius who had been clerics from a young age, the language of armed combat is used to describe the saints' struggles against the devil. The use of military metaphor throughout the corpus suggests that the hagiographers were not concerned with presenting their subjects as having spent time in the army, but rather with emphasising that they were able and willing to defend virtue and justice. In so doing, they emphasised their subjects' willingness to defend God's earthly kingdom.

The metaphorical use of military language is further emphasised by its use in the *vitae mulierum*. Although women were not encouraged to battle for Christ in a physical manner the language and imagery associated with warfare became a significant part of their *vitae*. At first glance, this portrayal seems more in keeping with the *virago* from early *vitae mulierum* than the sensual or somatic holiness often associated with the female saints of the high Middle Ages. In his prologue to the *vita Mariae*, Jacques de Vitry tells us that Fulk of Toulouse had been drawn to Liège by the reputation of the many holy women who were "soldiering" (*militantium*) for Christ.[189] In addition, military images can be seen throughout the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae*: Juette's usury is compared to the foundations of a church being shaken in battle; Lutgard is described as fighting against her flesh; Ida is

189. VMO prologue, par. 2, p. 636.

referred to as a "victorious warrior-maid."[190] On each occasion, the female *miles Christi* used the "weapons" of her flesh to gain victory over Satan.[191]

As is discussed in Chapter Three, an intrinsic part of the knightly vocation was identification with St. Martin, which often included the virtue of charity. Unlike military imagery, almsgiving does not seem, even ostensibly, to have been fundamentally incompatible with femininity. As in the *vitae* of the Villers brothers, so in women's *lives*, especially from the earlier Middle Ages, the fourth-century bishop of Tours was presented as a charitable model. Charity came to be associated with noble women, in a sense "feminised," in the earlier Middle Ages. Queen Radegund, an influential example of an early medieval holy woman, came to be closely associated with giving, explicitly in honour and imitation of St. Martin.[192] The social development of the later Middle Ages rendered it almost impossible for women to continue their charitable activities. In some cases, a woman giving alms to male beggars even called her modesty into question.[193] However, as the *vitae*

190. VJH c. 9, par. 21, p. 867; VLA bk. 2, c. 3, par. 43, p. 253; VIN c. 14. Cf. VMO bk. 1, c. 3, par. 31, p. 644; VJH c. 10, par. 34, p. 870; VJH c. 14, par. 43, pp. 871-72; VAS c. 1, par. 3-4, p. 477; VIN c. 32; VIL bk. 2, c. 23, par. 39, p. 181; VIL c. 1, par. 6, p. 109; VJM c. 6, par. 42, p. 456; VBN c. 1, p. 2; ibid, c. 4, p. 13. Similar language and imagery is found in the *lives* and writings of women throughout Europe: Hadewijch writes that Christ referred to her as the "strongest of warriors" (Hadewijch of Brabant, "Vision 14," quoted in Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, p. 241); Catherine of Siena's struggles to enter the religious life are referred to as her battles (De Sancta Catharina Senensi: Virgine de Poenitentia Sancti Dominici," *AASS* April vol. 3, bk. 1, c. 2, par. 51, p. 866); and an explicit parallel is drawn between Zita de Luca and St. Martin ("De S. Zita," c. 2, par. 7, p. 501). Cf. Bynum, "...And Woman," p. 259.

191. VMO bk. 1, c. 3, par. 31, p. 644; VMO bk. 2, c. 6, par. 61, pp. 651-52. Cf. VMO bk. 2, c. 6, par. 50, 650; Bugge, *Virginitas*, pp. 51-58; Newman, "Possessed by the Spirit," pp. 733-62. Griffin observes the use of military imagery in fourteenth-century Dominican *vitae mulierum* but does not address it as a gendered theme (Griffin, "*Ex exemplis illustribus*," pp. 268-69).

192. The *vitae* of these women often named Martin as a model for their subjects' charity (Giselle De Nie, "Fatherly and Motherly Curing in Sixth-Century Gaul: Saint Radegund's *Mysterium*," in *Women and Miracle Stories*, edited by Anne-Marie Korte, Studies in the History of Religions (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 72. Cf. P. Devos, Le manteau partagé. Un thème hagiographique en trois de ses variantes," *AB* 93 (1975): 157-165.

193. Maiju Lehmijoki-Gardner has demonstrated that in the *vitae* of later medieval Dominican saints, hagiographers began to show some hesitation in portraying holy women showing charity to men. She cites one occasion in which the saint, Villana Botti, would not have shown charity to a male beggar had she not known it was Christ himself. (Maiju Lehmijoki-Gardner, *Worldly Saints: Social Interaction of Dominican Penitent Women in Italy, 1200-1500* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1999), pp. 107-08). Cf. McNamara, "The Need to Give," pp. 199-221.

of the *mulieres sanctae* demonstrate, charity, either material charity or almsgiving of a spiritual nature often related to saving souls from purgatory, was still a significant *topos* in the *vitae* of female saints.[194]

As is detailed above, depictions of charity in the Villers *vitae* were often connected with St. Martin. The Villers *vitae* often draw explicit parallels between Martin and their subjects: Werricus habitually gave cloaks to the needy;[195] Gobertus was assigned the Martinian appellation of "father of orphans and protector of widows;" Goswin stated that Arnulfus "would have been a second Martin."[196] Although feminine themes such as charity and submission are extremely important in both the *vita Martini* and the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae,* not one of these texts names Martin explicitly as a model of charity.[197] This does not seem to be a function of the biological sex of the subject, as more than one of the *vitae* mention their female subject being devoted to or emulating a biologically male saint, often John the Evangelist.[198]

For secular men, who were neither ordained nor connected with a religious order, charity involved relinquishing control of material goods. The Villers brothers—monks, abbots and *conversi*—had no property of their own, but practised charity with the goods of the abbey. Villers was generous to the surrounding poor, but maintained strict regulations

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194. Thomas de Cantimpré's *life* of Margaret presents her as being inclined towards charity from her earliest days: whenever Margaret had even the smallest morsel of food, generally intended for her personal consumption, she would give it to the poor; both Margaret and Christina would beg on a regular basis and give any alms they received to the truly needy. McNamara, "The Need to Give," pp. 199-221. Cf. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 119-21.

195. VWA pp. 450-53.

196. VGA bk. 2, c. 4, par. 82, p. 393; VAR bk. 2, c. 1, par. 3, p. 617.

197. For an examination of the "feminine" aspects of the *life* of St. Martin see, Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), pp. 90-127.

198. Likewise, the *vitae* of male saints frequently mention female models: Martha, Mary, Rachel, and Leah (VGA bk. 2, c. 4, par. 67, p. 371; VCV c. 4, par. 23, p. 981; VIC prologue, p. 257. Cf. Constable, "An Interpretation of Martha and Mary," p. 50). The *vitae virorum* also portray their subjects as devoted to female saints such as Catherine, Mary Magdalene, and Elizabeth. Cf. Bynum, "'...And Woman,'" p. 259.

on almsgiving.[199] Nevertheless, Arnulfus arranged for the poor to be given animals and bread; Gobertus provided shoes for a community of impoverished beguines and Werricus gave food to the poor whenever he entered town. While the brothers would have been bound to obey the monastic strictures on almsgiving, their *vitae* still praise their quasi-subversive acts of charity.[200]

The *vitae* of female saints typically describe their subjects' lack of concern with transient worldly pleasures: Marie d'Oignies lived as a virtual pauper in the home of her wealthy parents; Margaret of Ypres scorned worldly finery. However, the element of renouncing control over these goods is conspicuously absent. Women, even when holding positions of responsibility for their estates, were seldom the titular owners. Hence, holy women could only carry out acts of charity with the permission of their male relatives. Female saints often encountered severe opposition because of their desire to give and were often punished if they acted upon this desire.[201] Like monks, female members of a religious community practised charity with goods that were not their own. Paradoxically, because women's communities did not necessarily have as severe regulation on almsgiving as men's houses, women's charity would have been less suspect than that practised by their male contemporaries.

Given that aspects of the chivalrous ideal occur in the *vitae* of both male and female saints, it is difficult to classify it as a gendered form of devotion. Nevertheless, it is pos-

199. Moreau, *L'abbaye*, pp. 261-66.

200. VAR bk. 2, c. 1, par. 4-5 p. 617; ibid, bk. 2, c. 1, par. 8, p. 618; VWA p. 453. Cf. VSA f. 214 r.

201. Juette of Huy encountered severe opposition from her father, who discovered that she had been charitable with money intended for the education of her sons. The same is true of many versions of the life of Juette's near-contemporary, Elisabeth of Hungary, whose exemplary charity incurred the wrath of her pagan husband. However, the literary nature of hagiography is reinforced in that both historically and in another manuscript tradition, Elisabeth's husband was supportive of her charitable activity. Cf. André Vauchez, "Charité et pauvreté chez sainte Elisabeth de Thuringe, d'après les actes des procès de canonisation," in *Études sur l'histoire de la pauvreté* edited by Michel Mollat (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1974), pp. 163-73.

sible to speak of a masculine ideal of chivalry. The knightly service that is portrayed in the *vitae* of former knights is very different from that portrayed in the *vitae* of women, or even of their male contemporaries. The service that men with military training provide for the kingdom of heaven is both somatic and focussed on the outside world. These men use their innate physical gifts of strength and skill to fight Christ's enemies. Their *vitae* praise their bodies as instruments through which God's will is done. The *vitae* of women and of non military men is no less somatic, but it has a very different focus. The saints' bodies are still valuable tools on their journey towards heaven; however, rather than being praised, the physical bodies of the saints are often spoken of in a language that seems to have overtones of quasi-dualistic contempt. Saints who practice knightly service through physical asceticism become, in the tradition of *imitatio Christi,* both saviour and victim.

Masculine Devotion

As is the case with many medieval texts, the Liègeoise *vitae* reinforce the value that medieval society placed on masculinity. The *mulieres sanctae* are frequently described as "becoming manly" or even "men;" the Villers brothers are often described as living their religious vocations in a "manly fashion."[202] Throughout the Middle Ages manly virtues have been exalted as the ideal of learning, strength or virtue (*virtus*) to which all members of a society, both male and female, have been expected to aspire. This is not as completely removed from medieval biological understanding as may be supposed: if the ideal conditions of heat and dryness prevailed at the moment of conception, a woman would give birth to a male child; if any fault occurred, an embryo would not be able to become male, and would instead be born in female body. A physical woman, therefore, was a failed man.

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202. VAR bk. 1, c. 1, par. 7, p. 610; VJH c. 7, par. 19, pp. 866-67.

From biology, this idea pervaded constructs of gender: failing to meet any social ideal—physical strength, wisdom or moral rectitude—was to be other than manly, by default to be feminine.[203] Men or women who succumbed to temptations were described as corrupted by womanly softness or decadence (*mollitia*).[204] Instead of being innate to maleness, masculinity was considered an ideal, which, admittedly, could be more easily achieved by men than by their female contemporaries. A man (*vir*) was thought to have, innately, the quality *virtus* ("moral excellence" or "manly strength"). Women did not innately have the quality of *virtus*; however, through diligent devotion to the Lord, a woman could become manly, that is, develop moral strength. A woman who had progressed towards the ideal of moral excellence (*virago*) is described as rising above her sex, that is, becoming manly or even becoming a man.[205]

Softness, decadence and corruption were associated with the feminine, etymologically as well as socially. Christian men and women were called to transcend the "feminine" limits of corporeality, and aspire to the achievement of "masculine" virtue.[206] Just as virtue in women was described as manly, immoral men were denounced for their womanly softness. Churchmen also cautioned beggars, tradesmen and labourers against *mollitia*,

203. John Arnold points out that masculinity in taken as normative in both medieval and modern society (Arnold, "Labour of Continence," pp. 104, 115, nn. 9-10).

204. Castelli, "I Will Make Mary Male," pp. 31-33; Mathew Kuefler, "Male Friendship and the Suspicion of Sodomy in Twelfth-Century France" in *Gender and Difference*, pp. 165-67; idem, *Manly Eunuch*, pp. 21-30. Cf. Farmer, "The Beggar's Body," pp. 153-64.

205. VIN c. 3; VMY c. 7; VMO bk. 1, c. 3, par. 26-32, pp. 642-44. Bouchard, *Every Valley*, pp. 117-19; Cadden, *Meaning of Sex Difference*, pp. 205-09; Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, p. 3; Lauwers, "L'institution," pp. 290-91; Murray, "'The Law of Sin,'" p. 11; Sylvia Schein, "The 'Female-Men of God' and 'Men who were Women.' Female Saints and Holy Land Pilgrimage during the Byzantine Period," *Hagiographica* 5 (1998): 1-34. Cf. Chava Weissler, "'For Women and for Men who are like Women:' The Construction of Gender in Yiddish Devotional Literature" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5 (1989): 7-24; Kruger, "Becoming Christian, Becoming Male?," pp. 21-41; Beattie, *God's Mother*, pp. 48-50.

206. Cf. Boyarin, "On the History," pp. 3-12; Castelli, "I Will Make Mary Male," pp. 31-33.

that is, womanly softness or decadence. It was thought that those who engaged in corporeal labour were susceptible to lust and beggars could easily fall into to laziness.[207]

Although both the Villers *vitae* and the Liègeoise *vitae mulierum* portray their subjects ideally achieving masculinity, the ways in which they are portrayed as accomplishing this differ considerably, though not in the ways that modern scholarship might suggest. The Villers *vitae* illustrate that masculine spirituality is deeply connected to the physical body. The Villers *vitae* depict many models of the physical body facilitating progress to the divine and the paths illustrated are as varied as the brothers themselves. The Villers hagiographers have both extolled their subjects' physicality and incorporated elements of the physical (for example, military prowess, ability to endure pain or physical strength), into their constructs of holiness. The importance of the body to the spirituality of many of the brothers challenges the idea of a distinct connection between the body and women that is now firmly entrenched in modern scholarship.

As is mentioned above, this is most notable in the *vitae* of the Villers knights. From the beginnings of their *vitae*, the hagiographers extol the extreme physical prowess of men such as Charles, Walter and Gobertus. During their time in the secular world, men such as Gobertus, Walter and Charles used their physical bodies to serve the Lord in the secular realm. As these men progressed on the path of conversion, they began to make use of their bodies to facilitate their active service or penitential asceticism. Even the portrayal of the contemplative ideal in the Villers *vitae militum* is connected to the physical world. This is illustrated in that Gobertus never ceased to perform acts of charity and Charles was called, out of Himmerode a second time, so that he might perform administrative duties.

In the *vitae* of the Villers brothers who had never known armed combat, the imagery of warfare takes on a different dimension. Although its literary elements are more

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207. Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, pp. 21-30. Cf. Farmer, "The Beggar's Body," pp. 153-64.

emphasised, the brothers often fight evil in a physical manner through the corporeal weapons of their bodies. Men such as Arnulfus, Gobertus and Petrus inflict pain and torment upon themselves in an explicit attempt to challenge their "ancient enemy" and to, as Arnulfus states, "put their sins to death."

A further dimension of masculine spirituality is the element of public influence. Medieval hagiography emphasises the public role of both male and female saints. Holy persons of both genders held authoritative roles and functioned as advisors to powerful members of secular society. More so than their female contemporaries, the *vitae* of the Villers brothers stress the impact of their actions for the community. The brothers are often portrayed as having an immediate and significant public impact; whereas the *mulieres sanctae* are portrayed as inspiring devotion in those who seek their advice and guidance.

Not unlike Bernard of Clairvaux, Gobertus and Charles had held positions of considerable secular prestige prior to their entry into religious life. As well as being from noble families, these men were known for such qualities as their intellectual prowess, moral rectitude, righteousness and love of justice. Their decision to enter religious life had a considerable impact on their secular society, which was further enhanced in that their example inspired others to do the same.[208] Communal influence was not merely limited to prominent men. Instead as is shown in various examples throughout the corpus, the Villers saints had considerable influence on both secular society and the religious community. Werricus' example inspired other members of his community to charity; Walter encouraged others in their devotion to the Blessed Virgin and Arnulfus inspired two nobles to establish houses for women who wished to adopt the Cistercian custom.

208. In her examination of fourteenth-century *lives* of Dominican saints, Lynne Griffin notes that the *vitae* of men are more likely than the *vitae* of contemporary women to emphasise holiness in ways which relate to the public sphere (Griffin, "*Ex exemplis illustribus*," pp. 300, 329-30).

The communal influence in the *vitae* of the Villers saints is significant. Each of the saints is not only presented as holy in himself, but also as an example of the innate holiness of the Cistercian Order. This emphasis on community would have discouraged members of the order from acts of holiness that were motivated by personal pride. The Liègeoise holy women were often regarded as public figures and attracted personal cults within the local secular community. However, as these women were not part of a religious Order their sanctity was personal and did not serve to enhance the reputation of an order. Although there are elements of the same in the Villers *vitae*, this is secondary to the portrayal of the saints as members of the Cistercian Order. This emphasis on community would have discouraged individual Cistercians from taking pride in their personal holiness.

The emphasis hagiography placed on male saints' public role explains the centrality of Marian devotion that Roisin and Bynum noticed in the *lives* of the Villers brothers. In collections of *miracula* that were contemporary with the *vitae* the Blessed Virgin is portrayed assisting both men and women who honour her. As is mentioned above, the Virgin was often instrumental in preventing public shame. Though the recipients of the Virgin's help are varied, it is significant that most of the stories involve persons wishing to be saved from public shame; a pregnant abbess who begs the Virgin that her secret not be discovered; a knight who harbours a secret lust for his master's wife; a nun who elopes in secret and later repents; a thief who fears being put to death in a state of mortal sin. In each case, the Virgin intervenes on behalf of her children.

In the Villers *vitae*, Mary offered her servants help for their public ministry. She rewarded Godefridus for his diligence in attending to the Lady Chapel; she allowed Abundus access to "patristic" writings which help him defend his views on the Assumption; she appeared to Arnulfus to assure him that his overstated asceticism was pleasing to the Almighty. As women played a less prominent role than their male contemporaries did in

later medieval society, it is far from surprising that public honour is less emphasised in the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae* than in the Villers texts. As there was little call for the women to provide instruction on controversial points of Mariology, it is also unsurprising that there is little concerning the doctrine of the Assumption in the *vitae mulierum.*

Because of the emphasis on the saints' public influence, it is far from surprising that the Villers hagiographers should emphasise the quality of justice, which was desirable in any leader. The links between justice and authority enhance the argument for its being portrayed as a masculine quality. An example in the *vita Werrici* stresses the importance of justice. While he was master of the *conversi*, a young man who expressed his wish to temporarily leave the order so that he might support his impoverished mother, approached Werricus. As the young man had taken permanent vows, Werricus, as a just judge, forbade him to leave. Yet like Christ, Werricus' justice was tempered with mercy: he immediately ordered that provisions from the monastery store be given to the *conversus* for his mother.[209]

The *vita Arnulfi* records an instance in which Arnulfus, though innocent, accepted necessary punishment. Arnulfus had secretly obtained permission to give forty-two loaves of bread to the poor, which exceeded Villers' strict regulations regarding almsgiving. A diligent brother who observed Arnulfus' transgression informed the abbot of what had transpired. The unnamed abbot, probably Walter, was fully aware of and had given his approval for Arnulfus' activities.[210] However, as the rules appeared to have been broken, the community justly expected punishment. Arnulfus and the abbot agreed that to prevent outrage, and not endanger any future illicit almsgiving, Arnulfus, though innocent, should be punished. Arnulfus spent eleven days forcibly separated from the rest of the community. During this time, he rested by the monastery gates, where, he remarked in jest, he had the fortune to ful-

209. VWA p. 451.

fil the same role as Saint Peter.[211] This incident again emphasises the importance of justice, while at the same time draws attention to Arnulfus' humility and charity.

In addition to its links with authority, it is important to note that justice would have been essential for regulating community life. The Villers brothers, even those on the grange farms were part of a traditional monastic community and would have been subject to monastic rules. Rather than being arbitrary, such rules would have been imperative for allowing a large number of men from diverse backgrounds to live together in peace. In order for the rules to be respected, it was necessary that they be enforced in a consistent manner.

Community is less central to the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae*. Although some were Cistercian nuns, many lived semi-religious, often solitary lives attached to a religious community. Although justice is emphasised in the Villers *vitae*, it is not intrinsically connected with maleness but appears a reflection of masculine social reality. The monastic structure would have required men to occupy positions of authority and to be accountable for their actions. To maintain such a system, the rules would have had to be applied equally to all. The fact that justice is emphasised in the *vitae* of monks is no less surprising than are Bynum's observations about food being central to the devotional lives of medieval women.

The leadership role of the Villers saints is also stressed through the examples of miraculous learning. As is discussed above, female saints are often portrayed as acquiring Latin literacy through miraculous means. The Villers *vitae* depict men who were either lettered in Latin or living in a world where literacy was common. As such, it is far from surprising that they would not present any instance of literacy as miraculous.

210. Cawley, "Four Abbots," p. 326.

211. VAR bk. 2, c. 1, par. 9, p. 618. For the significance of the gate of Villers see, Michel Dubuisson, "Inter Duas Portas...: Les sources écrits les plus anciennes relatives à la porterie de Villers" *Villers* 24 (2002): 4-10.

Instead, each example of miraculous learning in the Villers corpus shows its subject acquiring the ability to teach or to have erudite conversations with masters of theology. As is stated above, the *vita Arnulfi* records that Arnulfus was granted the blessing of having the mystery of the Trinity revealed in such a way that he could perceive, understand and most significantly, instruct otherwise learned masters of theology.[212] The *vita Nicholai* records similar instances, but does not explicitly relate them to any specific doctrine.[213] The *vitae* of Abundus and Petrus record that the Blessed Virgin instructed the saints on the finer points of the doctrine of the Assumption.[214]

Male saints were often admired for their masculine authority, erudition and leadership. However, in order to achieve this public role, saints had to renounce some of the trappings connected with the masculine ideals held by secular society. The acquisition of wealth is considered a mark of success: amassing sufficient worldly goods to provide for dependants is an important component of manliness. The *vitae* of Gobertus and Charles advocate leaving lives of wealth and power;[215] those of Nicholaos and Arnulfus praise poverty and simplicity. Many of the Villers *vitae* expound upon the noble status and worldly wealth of their subjects. However, it would appear that having wealth to renounce, and abandoning it for the sake of the kingdom, was an important component of Christian masculinity.[216]

212. VAR bk. 2, c. 3, par. 19, pp. 620-21.

213. VNC par. 5-6, pp. 278-79.

214. VAB c. 16, pp. 28-29; VPC 90r.

215. VGA bk. 2, c. 1, par. 33-41; VCV c. 1, par. 3-4, p. 977. Cf. Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, pp. 87-88.

216. While male orders could live lives of poverty and support themselves by begging, their female contemporaries were not free to pursue such forms of devotion. Women were discouraged from public begging. Their property was often officially owned by husbands or fathers, making renunciation of worldly goods, in many cases, either meaningless or impossible. Cf. Farmer, "Manual Labour," pp. 273-75.

Conclusion

A comparative analysis of the Liègeoise *vitae* of contemporary male and female saints reveals that gender is related to, but not intrinsically connected with religious behaviour. There are no forms of devotion that can be termed exclusively masculine or feminine and further research is necessary before the terms masculine or feminine spirituality can be thought of as definitive. At the very least, it would seem that the association between women and the body that is prevalent in modern scholarship has been exaggerated. Nevertheless, it is obvious from the above analysis that the religious behaviour described in a *vita* reflects social reality. The differences that are discussed above in relation to the Liègeois hagiographic portrayals of literacy and marriage are examples of the ways in which hagiography reflects the differences in the social reality of men and women in the high Middle Ages.

Conclusion

The book of Genesis recounts that the first sin condemned the human race to a life of physical labour: men, symbolised by Adam, to production, Eve, and by extension all women, to reproduction.[1] The punishments incurred by both genders were equally connected to the physical world. Nevertheless, as is made clear in the introduction to this thesis modern scholarship almost unilaterally discusses somatic devotional expressions as feminine. As is stated in the introduction to this thesis, work on the devotional practices of medieval women has enabled modern scholars to gain significant insights into both the religious behaviour of medieval women and the devotional climate of later medieval Europe. This thesis has used the methodology advanced by pioneering scholars of medieval women and religion to contribute to the growing field of medieval gender studies.

In keeping with the findings of scholars such as Martha Newman and Sharon Farmer, this thesis has demonstrated that the perceived connection between religious behaviour and femininity is not absolute. However, the fact that gender is neither the only nor the most important factor in influencing hagiographic constructions of holiness in the high Middle Ages does not mean that it can be dismissed. Instead, a close examination of the Villers corpus has confirmed what Steven Kruger and Mathew Kuefler have noted in other contexts: that there is such a thing as Christian masculinity.

As Caroline Walker Bynum has done for food in the *lives* of women, Chapter Three of this thesis attempted to follow the individual devotional strands of conversion, visionary experiences, Marian devotion and the crusading ideal in the *vitae* of Liègeois holy men. Aspects of conversion, such as using physical asceticism to effect satisfaction for sins, and visionary experiences have been associated, to varying degrees, with medieval wom-

1. Genesis 3:16-19. Cf. Bouchard, *Every Valley*, p. 120; Farmer, *Surviving Poverty*, pp. 39-42.

en. Gendered aspects of Marian devotion have been commented on, but not explored. Crusading is associated with men, if not with masculinity.

This thematic analysis forces the re-evaluation of the assumed connection between femininity and corporeality. Although medieval texts often associated femininity with the flesh, the Villers *vitae* illustrate that the connection between femininity and somatic forms of religious expression is far from apodictic. Particularly in the *vitae* of men who had spent time as knights, the hagiographers praise the men's physical strength and military prowess from the beginning of the *vitae*. Gobertus of Aspremont showed such aptitude for warfare that his father violated custom and made Gobertus heir to Aspremont instead of his older brother. Charles of Villers made a name for himself in the Scottish militia. Walter of Birbech was famed for his skill in knightly tournaments. As is illustrated in Chapter Three, each man's *vita* emphasised that the saint used his physical talents and secular influence to serve the Lord.

The same is true for the brothers who were known for their extraordinary feats of physical asceticism. It is impossible to read the incidents described in chapters three and four that detail Arnulfus' encounters with hedgehog pelts or Nicholaos' self-flagellation, without recognising that the physical body is important in the devotional lives of these men. Rather than being purely or even primarily feminine, asceticism was a way of allowing medieval saints of both genders to imitate and identify with their Saviour. As is the case with men such as Dominicus Loricatus and Dodo of Hascha whose ascetic life resulted in post-mortem stigmata, Arnulfus, Nicholaos, Simon and Petrus endeavoured to make satisfaction for sin, both their own transgressions and those of others, through their ascetic acts in a Christ-like manner.

As is the case for the role of the body in religious devotion, the analysis in the third chapter challenges the belief that visionary experiences are connected with feminine au-

thority. It is often acknowledged that visionary authority was one of the few ways in which women could gain status in medieval society. It is true that men had greater access to other authoritative opportunities such as education, ordination or holding public office; however, being born male did not necessarily guarantee rising to a position of influence. Men in lower social positions were often analogous to women, in that they had great difficulty attaining authoritative roles in society. As in the *vitae* of the *mulieres sanctae*, so the Villers *vitae* indicate in the *vitae* of men who had no obvious claim to authority, the hagiographers commonly portrayed visionary experiences which gave divine support to the visionaries' words.

Chapter Three challenges the universality of some tenets of modern scholarship on gender and devotion. Chapter Four builds on this discussion and questions the role of gender in portrayals of holiness. From this analysis, it would appear that the idea that traits can be regarded as either exclusively masculine or feminine was not prevalent in the medieval period. Scholars almost universally acknowledge that hagiography has traditionally presented holy women (*virgines*) as becoming men. Such women would develop manly strength (*virtus*) and carry out their devotional practices in a manly fashion (*viriliter*). The *vitae* of the Liègeoise *mulieres sanctae* repeatedly refer to the manliness of their subjects.

The simplest explanation for this imagery is the equation between masculinity and virtue. However, this conclusion is complicated by the fact that both the Villers texts and other texts showing the ideals held for holy men depict their subjects as developing feminine qualities. The equation of femininity with immorality is all too familiar. However, medieval society, particularly in the high Middle Ages, recognised some positive aspects of the feminine and even incorporated them into constructions of masculine holiness, specifically in relation to *imitatio Christi.*

"Masculinity," when defined as the ability to dominate, protect and reproduce, seems incongruent with the idea of *imitatio Christi* that was prevalent in the high Middle Ages, and imitating Christ's humanity is regarded as profoundly feminine. However, Christ's earthly life included many aspects of gender inversion. Through his feminine submission, Jesus carried out the manly task of human salvation; through his feminine poverty, Jesus achieved heavenly riches; and through his womanly meekness, he achieved glory. Instead, it seems that to identify with the humanity of Christ was to imitate his femininity and imitate the humble gentle Jesus, who wept, and who ultimately laid down his life for those he loved.[2]

Little work has been done on whether or not holy men identified with the maleness of the human Christ. Men identified with the humanity of God incarnate: priests celebrated Mass *in persona Christi*; as is discussed earlier, lay men and men of lower social standing often imitated Christ's passion through "feminine" physical asceticism. The new "vocation" of chivalry allowed pious laymen to apply their masculine gifts of strength to protecting Christendom. In light of the human Christ having achieved the ultimate masculine ideal in seemingly unmanly ways, it is interesting to note that many of his qualities, which were considered undesirable or "unmanly" by society were considered ideal by men in the high Middle Ages, such as holy poverty, an ideal held both by the Cistercians, and itinerant preaching movements such as the Franciscans. Mercy and submission to obedience were emphasised among the Cistercians as well as among traditional monastic orders.[3]

In addition to feminine values, feminine language and imagery were often used in the *vitae* of male saints, particularly as they advanced towards holiness. Near the beginning

2. R. N. Swanson provides this definition (Swanson, "Angles Incarnate," pp. 160-61).

3. McNamara, "The *Herrenfrage*," pp. 3-23.

of the spiritual journey, the male subjects of *vitae* were identified with their grammatically feminine souls (*animae*) and sometimes are referred to as "brides of Christ" or are depicted using images which recall Solomon's shulamite bride. Often hagiographers went so far as to use the language of femininity, notably Francis of Assisi is addressed as Lady Poverty and refers to himself as a "little woman." As Caroline Walker Bynum has demonstrated, the imagery of mothering as a metaphor for monastic authority is prevalent in Cistercian writings from the same period.

The reversal of gender imagery was part of illustrating the process of transformation. The discourse of reconciling opposites was prevalent in the Christian tradition and hagiography provides many examples of both male and female saints whose transformation is illustrated through the language and imagery of gender. The abovementioned example of Perpetua is familiar to most scholars of gender and religious devotion. As the above discussion illustrates, although no religious behaviour was exclusive to either sex, hagiographic *topoi* show definite gendered tendencies. While it is obvious that these tendencies are not intrinsically connected to biological sex, examining them from a historical, literary or theological perspective allows greater understanding of the ideological and social reality of men and women from the high Middle Ages.

It is clear that later medieval hagiography recognised two models of religious behaviour: the first, the active life, or combining service to the divine with life in the world; the second, the contemplative, which was depicted as consisting of visionary spirituality and *miracula* and often expressed in sensual language.[4] To the people of the Middle Ages, these were expressed, symbolically; the first was Martha or Leah, the second Mary or Rachel. The contemplative spirituality represented by the later two women was commonly regarded as ideal. Though this tendency had not changed completely by the

4. Constable, *Three Studies*, pp. 1-141.

high Middle Ages, didactic literature in this period also emphasised the value of the active life. As is seen in the Villers corpus, both the model of progression from the physical to the contemplative and the *vita mixta* were seen as having some role in the journey towards holiness.

The fact that these four women were used in the *vitae* of both men and women to exemplify various forms of religious behaviour again emphasises that ideals of behaviour were not exclusively linked with gender. Nevertheless, modern scholars have alternately discussed the "active" and "passive" models of religious devotion as "masculine," "feminine" or "androgynous." From the textual witness of Liègeoise hagiography it would seem that the truth is somewhat more complex. Despite gendered tendencies, masculinity or femininity is far from the only factor which influences hagiographic portrayals of holiness.

As this thesis has made clear, the heavenly lily garden of Liège contained as many saintly warriors as holy virgins. Both the *milites* and *ancillae Christi* appear to have done their share of languishing in ecstasy and fighting to establish God's kingdom. If we are to understand the complex tapestry that is the medieval religious milieu, gender can neither be ignored nor dismissed. However, it is similarly imperative that devotional practice cannot and should not be linked solely to gender. Studies of medieval feminine religious practice have yielded many significant insights. As has been demonstrated above, future studies of masculinity hold similar potential.

Appendix A: Biographical Details for the *Mulieres Sanctae*[1]

Name	Year of Death	Institutional affiliations	Author and Date of *Vita*, *Bibliotheca Hagiographia Latina* (BHL) number
Marie d'Oignies	1213	Hospital sister at leper house in Williambrouk, then laysister/beguine at Oignies	*Vita* written by Jacques de Vitry, then a canon regular, in 1215; Supplement written by Thomas de Cantimpré, then a canon regular, c. 1231. BHL 5516-5517
Christina Mirabilis	1224	Laywoman at St. Trond	*Vita* written by Thomas de Cantimpré, then a canon Regular, c.1232 BHL 1746-47
Juette of Huy	1228	Hospital sister, then recluse at the leper house of Huy	*Vita* written by the Premonstratensian, Hugh de Floreffe, before 1239. BHL 4620
Ida of Nivelles	1232	Beguine in Nivelles, then Cistecian nun at La Ramée	*Vita* written by an anonymous author, probably a Cistercian monk, soon after her death. BHL 4146-47
Margaret of Ypres	1237	Laywoman at Ypres	*Vita* written by Thomas de Cantimpré, then a member of the Dominican Order, c. 1240 BHL 5319
Lutgard of Aywières	1246	Cistercian nun at Aywières	*Vita* written by Thomas de Cantimpré, between 1246 and 1249. BHL 4950
Alice of Schaerbeek	1250	Cistercian nun at La Cambre	*Vita* written c. 1260, by an anonymous male author, probably a Cistercian monk BHL 264
Juliana of Cornillon	1259	Hospital sister	*Vita* written between 126 and 1264 at Mont Cornillon, probably by a canon of St. Martin's in Liège BHL 4521
Beatrice of Nazareth	1268	Cistercian nun.	*Vita* written shortly after her death by a priest attached to the community of Nazareth. Spent her childhood with the beguines. BHL 1062

[1] Taken from Jennifer Carpenter, "A New Heaven and A New Earth." Diss. University of Toronto, 1997. iv-vi

Appendix B[1]: Composition of Some Villers Manuscripts

Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz, theol.lat.4 n. 195
Arnulfus mon. Villariensis in Belgio
Margarita de Ipris v.

Brussel/Bruxelles (Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I/ Bibliothèque royale Albert Ier)

MS BR 1780-1781
71r-78r Walterus de Birbaco

MS BR 4459-4470.
46r-55r Aleidis Scharembekana
63r-63v Walterus de Birbaco
64r-135v Beatrix prioressa in Nazareth
154r-160v Werricus prior Alnensis
161r-172v Christina Mirabilis v. in oppido S. Trudonis
173v-199r Margarita de Ipris v.

MS BR 7776-7781
86r-90v Petrus conv. Villariensis in Belgio
118r-126 Gobertus Asperimontis

MS BR 8965-8966
209r-224r Simonis Alnensis

MS BR 19525
Tot. Abundus mon. Villariensis in Belgio

MS BR 1047,
72r-82v Werricus prior Alnensis

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud. misc. 222
1v-18r De Vita Arnulfi conversi in Villariensis

Ms. Var. Pamplona Archivo General de Navarra II
Arnulfus mon. Villariensis in Belgio

Troys, Bibliothèque municipale, 1434
Arnulfus mon. Villariensis in Belgio

Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 7928
47-64 Godefridus Pachomius
64v-86r Abundus mon. Villariensis in Belgio
93-113 Petrus mon. Villariensis in Belgio

Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 12831
16v-51r Maria Oigniacensis
55r-65r Christina Mirabilis v. in oppido S. Trudonis
65r-98v Arnulfus mon. Villariensis in Belgio
126r-141v Maria Oigniacensis

[1] Manuscripts of the Villers *vitae*. Bold text indicates that the manuscript was consulted in the preparation of this thesis.

Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Ser. N. 12710

133r-133v	Maria Magdalena paenitens	
190r-194v	Maria Oigniacensis	
194v-197r	Walterus de Birbaco	
197v-198r	Beatrix prioressa in Nazareth	
199v-201r	Thomas de Cantimprato	Ord. Praed.

Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, ser. N. 12854

45r-64r	Godefridus sacristae Villariensis	
64v-86v	Abundus mon. Villariensis in Belgio	
161v-162v	Gobertus Asperimontis	

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MS BR 1638-49
MS BR 1770-1777
MS BR 1780-1781
MS BR 4459-4470
MS BR 4877-4886
MS BR 7761-7781
MS BR 8965-8966
MS BR 19525
MS BR II 1047
MS BR II 1542
MS BR II 1658

London (British Library)
MS BL Add. 18148
MS BL Add. 25053

Oxford (Bodleian Library)
MS Laud. Misc. 222

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Dodo of Hascha. March, vol. 3, pp. 850-52.

Dominic di Guzman. August, vol. 1, pp. 545-59.

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Godfrey of Cappenberg. Jan. vol. 1, pp. 834-860.

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Herman Joseph. April vol. 1, pp. 682-723.

Ida of Louvain. April vol. 2, pp. 155-89.

Joachin of Siena. April vol. 2, pp. 454-65.

Juliana of Mont-Cornillon. April, vol. 1, pp. 437-77.

Juette of Huy. January, vol. 1, pp. 863-887.

Lutgard of Aywières. June, vol. 3, pp. 231-263.

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